OBESITY

In the Ancient Greece, Hippocrates (Fig. 1) was the first physician to understand that weight depended on the balance between the quantity of food ingested and the amount of energy spent, and that obesity was a dangerous condition for the cardiovascular complications, sleep apnea and infertility.

Pythagorus (569-475 BC) (Fig. 2) recommended moderation in the ingestion of food and wine to prevent pathologies and Galen (Fig. 3) wrote one of the first weight loss programs based on diet and physical exercise.

Adolphe Quetelet (1796-1874) (Fig. 4) described the relation existing between weight (expressed in kilograms) and the square of the height (in meters), defined as body mass index (BMI) or Quetelet index. To date, BMI is the most widely used parameter to identify obese people and to determine the severity of this pathology.

Contributed by
Federica Guaraldi*; Renato Pasquali
*Endocrinology Unit, Department of Clinical Medicine, S. Orsola-Malpighi General Hospital, Bologna, Italy, 40138.