ABSTRACTS

greater achievements than the tremendous advances of the past one hundred years. 20 references.

F. A. M.


The history of anesthesia begins with the first use of the poppy, the mandragora, the hyoscyamus, and alcohol in the relief of human pain. Poppy was used to produce sleep, to relieve cough, and to relieve pain. It was known to produce lethargy and death. Tears of poppy—opium, were well known. Hyoscyamus was known to be poisonous and to lack uniformity in its effects. It was generally combined with opium. Mandragora was used for surgical anesthesia for many centuries. Wild lettuce was used as a soporific. Mulberry, a species of hemp, was used by the Scythians, the Chinese and by surgeons of the Western world. It had a small reputation as a soporific. 1 reference.

F. A. M.


Mesmerism in surgery was part of the mesmeric movement that began in England in 1837 under the leadership of John Elliotson. An Irishman, Chenevix, who gave demonstrations of mesmeric phenomena was asked by Elliotson to try mesmerism on certain patients at St. Thomas's Hospital in 1829. In 1837 a Frenchman, Dupotet became associated with Elliotson at the North London Hospital. Mesmeric demonstrations were soon the talk of London. Medical and lay persons flocked to the hospital. Opposition to Elliotson's demonstrations developed within the hospital and eventually resulted in Elliotson's resignation. He continued to demonstrate the truth of mesmerism. He and his sympathizers published a journal, "The Zoist: A Journal of Cerebral Physiology and Mesmerism, and their Application to Human Welfare." Jules Cloquet, a French surgeon, performed a mastectomy on a patient in mesmeric sleep in 1829. Reports of the use of mesmeric anesthesia for surgical operations, some from America, appeared in The Zoist. In America the opposition was not as vituperative as that of the British medical journals. James Esdaile read reports of Elliotson's activities and tried mesmerism in surgical cases. Esdaile later tried ether for anesthesia. The margin of uncertainty in producing anesthesia was greater with mesmerism than with ether and chloroform. The surgical use of mesmerism declined.


In 1846 sulfurous ether was demonstrated to be relatively safe as an agent for the alleviation of the pain of operations. The controversy concerning the discovery of the anesthetic properties of ether attracted attention which undoubtedly contributed to the rapid popularization of its use. Oliver Wendell Holmes deserves credit for the independent coinage of the words anesthesia and anaesthetic; however, Dioscorides used the word anesthesia as well as rectal and local anesthesia. Mandragora and alcohol were used in early attempts to relieve pain. The demonstration of ether anesthesia by Morton was the culmination of a long period of research and discovery. In the books concerning anesthesia a surprising number of errors will be found. Coincidence also plays a part in the development of anesthesia. 23 references.

F. A. M.
The mesmerists were hostile to ether and chloroform. They claimed that mesmerism was safer as an anesthetic agent. The advocates of mesmerism kept alive the interest in the subject and helped pave the way for the acceptance of chemical anesthetics. 89 references.

F. A. M.


John Snow was the “alpha” of physician anesthetists. Snow is remembered by some members of the medical profession for his investigations of cholera. His first medical paper, which he read in 1841, was on the subject of asphyxia and the resuscitation of stillborn children. Snow’s monograph on ether was published in September, 1847. In the monograph he first published his observations on the stages or degrees of anesthesia. He divided the signs into four well known stages which are still recognized. In 1858, in his book on anesthesia, he described a fifth stage, intercostal paralysis. Snow developed anesthetic apparatus and was positive in his opinion as to the desirability of administering anesthetics by exact methods. He warned of the dangers of chloroform. The acceptence by Queen Victoria of chloroform analgesia assured its continued use in obstetrics. Snow made important observations on the use of chloroform and repeatedly warned of its dangers. After his death, his monograph, “On Chloroform and Other Anaesthetics: Their Action and Administration,” was published. Snow searched for the perfect anesthetic, investigating many possibilities. Of the substances he tried, amylene seemed to come closest to his ideal. He administered it clinically in 238 cases but discontinued its use after the death of two of the patients. Modern anesthesia owes a debt to John Snow who was an indefatigable worker, a scientist of no mean ability and a searcher for the ultimate truths. 43 references.

F. A. M.


Before the era of modern anesthesia, attempts were made to relieve the suffering of childbirth. The ideal agent for the relief of such pain has not been found. The advisability of complete analgesia and amnesia during labor has been questioned. Early efforts to relieve the pain of childbirth were met with opposition. Sir James Y. Simpson is credited with the introduction of modern anesthesia in obstetrical practice. He first used ether for childbirth on January 19, 1847, and on November 8 of the same year he used chloroform for the first time in an obstetrical case. John Snow administered chloroform to Queen Victoria for the birth of her eighth child. In the United States there was a long delay in the application of anesthesia for obstetrical purposes after it was used for surgical cases; however, a case was reported in April, 1847, in which letheon had been used in a case of labor. The principle American champion of the use of ether in childbirth was Walter Channing. Augustus Kinsley Gardner administered chloroform for the first time in this country for a normal delivery in February, 1848.

Nitrous oxide was introduced into obstetrical practice by Kliikovitsch of Petrograd in 1880 and by Winckel of Dresden in 1881. Nitrous oxide and oxygen were used by J. Clarence Webster of Chicago in 1909. Scopolamine hydrobromide and morphine sulfate were introduced by von Steinbüchel in