



Pioneers and Predecessors

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It has been referred to as “the most significant event in American medical history” by the American Society of Anesthesiologists.

On Oct. 16, 1846, at approximately 10:15 a.m., an event occurred that would change the world. On that day at Massachusetts General Hospital, in what is now referred to as the Ether Dome, a dentist, Dr. William T. G. Morton, publicly demonstrated the first successful ether anesthetic. After administering the ether utilizing a glass reservoir device, Morton said to renowned surgeon Dr. John Collins Warren, “Your patient is ready, sir.” Under general anesthesia, Dr. Warren removed a jaw tumor from the neck of 20-year-old Edward Gilbert Abbott, a printer and editor. Following the surgery, the patient replied, “I did not experience pain at any time, though I knew that the operation was proceeding.” Dr. Warren remarked to the gallery of observers, “Gentlemen, this is no humbug.” Previous to this event, at this same location, Horace Wells, another dentist, had attempted to demonstrate the use of nitrous oxide. He was later credited with the discovery after his death.



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“GENTLEMEN, THIS IS NO HUMBUG.”

Sitting in the original Ether Dome gallery at Massachusetts General Hospital, I had the opportunity to listen to a live lecture on pediatric anesthesia. Though the lecturer was interesting and very knowledgeable, I found it difficult at times to keep my mind focused on the speaker. Instead, a picture on the wall depicting the first demonstrated ether anesthetic in this very room seemed to mesmerize me and make the figures in the painting come alive. The very room with its rich history, artifacts, and commemorative plaques seemed to inform the onlooker of the significance of being at the anesthesia world's “ground zero.” The essence of the room spoke of pioneers before who had learned in this great teaching amphitheater of healing and anesthesia to alleviate pain and suffering. They had gone out from here to treat patients and to make a difference in their part of the world. I left the amphitheater with a sense of awe and respect for the contributions of dentists Dr. William Morton and Dr. Horace Wells.

Now, sitting thousands of miles from the Ether Dome in Boston, I am writing this at Loma Linda University where another more recent pioneer, Dr. Niels Bjorn Jorgensen (1894-1974), first demonstrated what is now known as the Jorgensen or Loma Linda tech-

nique of IV sedation for dentistry. He notably combined the ideas of sedation and dentistry. He recognized a need to provide a means to calm the anxious dental patient with predictable safety. He developed both oral and intravenous techniques. Dr. Jorgensen advanced dentistry's understanding of pain and anxiety, and provided safe techniques to address these dental problems. Thousands of dental practitioners and patients have benefited from his research.

As guest editor for this issue dedicated to anesthesia and analgesia, I wanted the issue to be practical to the every day practice of dentistry. The individuals I asked to write articles are not only some of the brightest stars today in our profession, but they are also practicing clinicians. They are actually “in the trenches” with the rest of us. They are not only excellent clinicians, but also gifted teachers and communicators. I am very grateful and appreciative they agreed to be contributors for this issue. As many of you know, taking time out of demanding academic, patient, and family schedules to author a journal article is difficult. I would like to publicly thank Dr. Alan Kaye, Dr. Stanley Malamed, Dr. Robert Merin, Dr. Larry Trapp, Dr. Joel Weaver, and Dr. John Yagiela (look for Dr. Weaver's and Dr.

Yagiela's articles in the January 2007 issue) for their outstanding contributions. They are representative of Loma Linda University, Ohio State University, University of California, Los Angeles, and University of Southern California.

I hope you will find these articles informative and practical. Some of the information is by design to review and refresh basic principles, while also including the latest information on local anesthetics and pain control. My intent is to provide the reader with information that will be useful, while assessing the difficult anesthesia/analgesia patient and provide answers to everyday anesthesia questions. It is also to encourage all dental practitioners to appreciate the historical path to our current ability to administer anesthesia to our patients, which was earned tediously by the dental pioneers and predecessors. Strive to update your anesthesia knowledge regularly. I invite you to become a member of the California Dental Society of Anesthesiology (www.cdsa.info). CDSA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing continuing education in the area of dental anesthesiology. All dentists are welcome. Thank you for the privilege and honor of being your guest editor. May your patients be safe and your practice successful. ■■■■