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ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS FROM THE WOOD LIBRARY-MUSEUM

New Orthoform for Old Freud: Insoluble Numbing for Sigmund's Insoluble Cancer



Sculptor Robert Toth captured Sigmund Freud (1856 to 1939, *left*) in one of those rare moments when the “Father of Psychoanalysis” was not puffing on one of his 20 cigars daily. That heavy smoking habit led to an oral cancer, which ulcerated the area where all of those cigar butts had rested at the back right of Freud’s mouth. As the cancer recurred and was surgically carved away, a painful nonhealing crater developed. To ease Freud’s suffering, one consultant, Dr. Joseph Weinmann, directed that New Orthoform (*right*) be dusted liberally onto the gaping hole at the back of Freud’s mouth before a massive oral prosthesis was inserted. That white dusting powder was a highly insoluble hydroxyaminobenzoic ester which had been synthesized by Alfred Einhorn (1856 to 1917) and manufactured by Hoechst, as had its predecessor, Orthoform. By interchanging “Old” Orthoform’s hydroxy and amino groups, New Orthoform had proven to be not only a cheaper local anesthetic to manufacture but also one which could double as a bactericidal desiccant. How ironic that Freud’s academic career had opened with his professional (and personal) use of one local anesthetic, cocaine, and would close with his terminal use of another, New Orthoform! (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists’ Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology.)

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