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ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS FROM THE WOOD LIBRARY-MUSEUM

Shipway Apparatus: Warming up to Ether Administration



The optimal temperature for vaporized anesthetics was a hot topic in 1916 when Francis E. Shipway, M.D. (1875 to 1968), introduced his eponymous apparatus for warm anesthetic delivery (*right*). The technique gathered steam on both sides of the Atlantic when prominent anesthesiologist James T. Gwathmey, M.D., published on warm ether administration in the United States. Unlike the simple wire-mesh mask (*lower left*) used for “cold ether,” the Shipway apparatus consisted of two vaporizers—one each for ether and chloroform—and a thermos containing a “U-tube” in heated water. Shipway’s previously frosty relationships with surgeons thawed when everyone realized that warm ether meant cooler operating rooms. Heated vapors also appeared to provide smoother anesthetic delivery, fewer pulmonary complications, and improved temperature regulation for the patient. After the fervor for warm anesthetics cooled, Shipway’s career only continued to heat up. He was knighted in 1928 after anesthetizing King George V for several procedures. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists’ Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology.)

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