

■ REVIEWS OF WEB SITES

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Virtual Museum of Anesthesiology

URL: <http://umdas.med.miami.edu/aha/vma>

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Although the modern history of anesthesia is relatively short, beginning with the first administration of ether 150 years ago, it is rich. Anesthesia has developed into a modern specialty through the efforts of inventors, scientists, and physicians and includes interesting equipment and people. Until recently, the only way to learn more about this topic has been to travel to the Wood Library in Park Ridge, Illinois. The Internet, however, makes it possible to view interesting pieces of equipment at the Wood Library Virtual Museum of Anesthesiology (VMA). The VMA is an Internet resource devoted exclusively to anesthesia history and is now also the Internet "home" of the Anesthesia History Association. Combining the Anesthesia History Association Web site with The Virtual Museum of Anesthesiology has created a comprehensive online resource for anyone interested in anesthesia history. The VMA is a resource that puts many items of historical importance into a single place where they are accessible by nearly any interested person.

Quality of information

The Virtual Museum of Anesthesiology is well organized, and information appears to be accurate. The "displays" consist of one or more photographs with a short description of the object or person shown. There is an archive of articles and written works that consists of important historical works, such as early descriptions of ether anesthesia, as well as essays that give a historical perspective. Information does not appear to be peer-reviewed, but because nearly all of the information in this resource is historical, it is easily verified.

Quality of Links

The VMA offers a Museum Resource Desk that contains a list of links to other history resources. All links were functional at the time that the site was reviewed. Each link contained a concise, accurate description of the resource and contact information.

Search Capabilities

The site is well organized, but contains no search capabilities. Moving from one section to another requires the user to navigate up through one or more levels and then move back down. Although each page does have a link to the top page, the VMA would benefit from more extensive navigation tools, such as a list of pages.

Summary

The VMA is a resource that puts many items of historical importance into a single place where they are accessible by nearly any interested person. Learning about how equipment and techniques were developed helps to put current developments into perspective and makes each of us a better physician. The VMA is a well-organized and informative introduction to the history of our specialty. It is a good resource for anesthesiologists or anyone interested in the history of medicine.

Reviewer

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