
ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS FROM THE PIERRE VIARS MUSEUM

Ombrédanne Inhaler 1908–1982(?)

In 1907, after a number of anesthetic fatalities, Pr. Auguste Nélaton gave his pupil Louis Ombrédanne the task of creating a safe anesthetic device. The prototype (left), made by Ombrédanne and his driver, consisted of a metal English sweet tin that acted as a reservoir and was fitted with felt to absorb ether, a graduated air inlet, and a respiratory reserve chamber. Modifications of the design followed quickly. The elliptical reservoir became spherical (center), the mask and the reservoir were separated, but the design hardly changed over many years of use apart from the addition of oxygen and carbon dioxide (Level 0: air only, no ether [top right]; Level 8: no air, ether full and rebreathing [bottom right]). It was sold by the Collins Company (more than 80,000) around the world. Thanks to Ombrédanne, inhalation anesthesia made great strides toward safety and allowed proper control. The simplicity of the device allowed its use by a large number of nonspecialists. This delayed the development of anesthesia as a medical specialty in France until the late 1940s. (Reproduced from Cazalaà JB, Cousin MT, Baker D. Apparatus for anesthesia and intensive Care. Paris, France, Glyphe, 2005, with authorization.)

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