

Il était une fois l'anesthésie

Expo 2025 - Musée de l'Histoire de la Médecine
28 juin - 25 octobre 2025



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EXPOSITION

28 juin > 25 octobre 2025
Musée d'Histoire de la Médecine
12 rue de l'École de Médecine, Paris 6^e

Accès et information : <https://u-paris.fr/bibliotheques/exposition-anesthesie-musee-histoire-medecine/>



Musée d'Histoire de la Médecine - Université Paris Cité

 

The history of anaesthesia has been marked by discoveries and progress. The machines, equipment and drugs presented in this exhibition have made it possible for surgery and childbirth to be performed in optimum safety.

On 16 October 1846, William Thomas Green Morton (1819-1868) administered the first public ether anaesthesia at the Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston (USA). Within six months, this new technique was being used all over the world and stimulated physiological and pharmacological research, especially in France and England.

Claude Bernard (1813-1878) described the effects of curare on muscles (1856) and Paul Bert (1833-1886) and many others defined the effects of anaesthetic agents on the heart, the ventilation and the brain.

For several decades, ether and chloroform were the only general anaesthetic agents. Two new techniques appeared in the 1870s and 1880s: intravenous general anaesthesia (1874) and local anaesthesia using cocaine for cataract surgery (1884).

From now on, local, then regional anaesthesia diversified thanks to synthetic products and new techniques: spinal anaesthesia (1898), epidural anaesthesia (1901), segmental epidural anaesthesia (1920), etc.

In 1935, the Société d'Étude sur l'Anesthésie et l'Analgésie was founded in Paris, which published the French journal *Anesthésie Analgésie*. Specific teaching of anaesthesia began in France in 1947, and the first certificates in anaesthesia and intensive care were awarded in 1949. The anaesthetists were assisted by specially trained nurse-anaesthetists. The Ministry of Health acknowledged the speciality of anaesthesia and intensive care in 1965.

Advances in general anaesthesia, regional anaesthesia, pain management and perioperative medicine have greatly improved the safety of surgery and the comfort of patients. Every year, 13 millions anaesthesias are performed in France by around 9,900 anaesthetists and 11,000 nurse-anaesthetists. The risk of death entirely due to anaesthesia is estimated at 1 per 500,000 procedures, compared with 1 per 10,000 in 1980.

Over 200 objects, instruments and documents are on display in fifteen showcases.

This exhibition is jointly organized by

the Club de l'Histoire de l'Anesthésie et de la Réanimation,

the Musée de l'Histoire de la Médecine de Paris

the Société Française d'Anesthésie et de Réanimation.

to read or listen on the net

Version française

<https://char-fr.net/-Expo-2025-.html>

English version

<https://char-fr.net/-Expo-2025-en-.html>

Contacts

Curator of the exhibition

Jean-Bernard Cazalaà : jbcaz@orange.fr

President of the History of Anaesthesia and Intensive Care Club

Dominique Simon: president@char-fr.net

Opening times

Monday to Saturday (closed on Thursdays);

2pm to 5.30pm (last admission at 5pm);

Closed on public holidays.

Access

UFR de Médecine

12 rue de l'École de Médecine, 75006 Paris

On the second floor of the Université Paris Cité headquarters, in a room built in 1905, is the Museum of the History of Medicine.

Métro

Line 4 : station Odéon

Line 10 : station Cluny

Museum contact

Contact : 01 76 53 16 93

musee.histoire-medecine@u-paris.fr

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**l'anesthésie
EXPO
2025**
Quand l'anesthésie explore ses origines

**Il était une fois l'anesthésie -
Expo-2025**
28 juin - 25 octobre 2025

Épisodes sonores

Avant l'anesthésie

Le texte

Avant la découverte de l'anesthésie

00:00 / 04:01

Le Club de l'Histoire de l'Anesthésie et de la Réanimation (CHAR)

Keeper of the Medical Memory

www.char-fr.net

Origins and foundation

The Club de l'Histoire de l'Anesthésie et de la Réanimation was created with the aim of bringing together healthcare professionals, historians and enthusiasts around a common interest: the history of anaesthesia. Founded in November 1999, it is clear that CHAR is part of a long tradition of learned societies dedicated to the study of the history of medicine and plays a crucial role in documenting and disseminating knowledge about the progress of anaesthesia through the ages.

Anaesthesia, as a medical discipline, has undergone major advances since its introduction in the mid-nineteenth century. The pioneers of anaesthesia, such as William T.G. Morton, who demonstrated the use of ether in 1846, and John Snow, who perfected administration techniques, paved the way for safer and less painful medical practices. CHAR is committed to honour these pioneers and document their contributions.

Club missions

The Club de l'Histoire de l'Anesthésie et de la Réanimation has several main missions:

1. **Keeping the memory:** CHAR collects and archives documents, instruments and personal accounts relating to the history of anaesthesia. This preservation mission is essential for understanding the development of the anaesthetic techniques and practices.
2. **Research and documentation:** The club encourages and supports historical research in anaesthesia. CHAR members publish articles, books and reports that help to enrich knowledge in this field.
3. **Education and Training:** CHAR organizes conferences, seminars and workshops to educate healthcare professionals and the general public about the history of anaesthesia. These events raise awareness of the importance of past advances and their impact on current practices.

Activities and Events

The History of Anaesthesia and Intensive Care Club organizes a variety of activities and events throughout the year. These include

1. **Conferences and symposia:** The CHAR regularly organizes conferences and symposia in France and abroad on specific themes relating to the history of anaesthesia. It collaborates with academic institutions by contributing to teaching and the creation of history diplomas. These events bring together experts and enthusiasts.
2. **Exhibitions:** The club helps to organize temporary and permanent exhibitions in museums and medical institutions. These exhibitions feature antique instruments, historical documents and posters focusing on an event, a specific equipment or a pioneer in anaesthesia.
3. **Publications:** CHAR publishes newsletters, articles in national and international professional journals and books covering various aspects of the history of anaesthesia. These publications are a valuable resource for researchers and enthusiasts.
4. **Guided Tours:** The club organizes guided tours of historic sites related to anaesthesia, such as ancient hospitals, science museums and the birthplaces of anaesthetic pioneers.

Importance of the Club

The History of Anaesthesia Club plays a crucial role in preserving and promoting the history of anaesthesia. By documenting past advances, CHAR provides a better understanding of the challenges and successes of modern medicine.

1. **Understanding Medical Progress:** By studying the history of anaesthesia, we can better understand the progress made in this field.
2. **Inspiration for Future Doctors:** The history of anaesthesia is rich in examples of perseverance, innovation and dedication.
3. **Preservation of Cultural Heritage:** Anaesthesia is an integral part of humanity's cultural and scientific heritage. CHAR is helping to preserve this heritage for future generations.
4. **Raising public awareness:** By organizing events and exhibitions, CHAR raises public awareness of the importance of anaesthesia in modern medicine. This awareness can help demystify certain medical practices and promote a better understanding of health.

Through its missions of preservation, research, education and collaboration, CHAR plays an essential role in documenting and promoting the history of anaesthesia. By participating in the club's activities, members help to enrich knowledge in this field and inspire future generations of healthcare professionals.



Dräger

