

MEDICINE

Inflammable Ethylene Gains In Usage as Anesthetic

ETHYLENE, which has met much opposition to its use as an anesthetic, seems now to be coming into its own. One of the discoverers of its anesthetic properties, Prof. Arno B. Luckhardt of the University of Chicago, speaking at the recent Congress of Anesthetists, pointed out how its value was now being recognized by both medical scientists and patients.

A recent survey of 534 anesthetists showed that 220 of them were using ethylene, and with no explosions recorded. The danger of this anesthetic because of liability to explosion was one of the drawbacks that made it unpopular with surgeons and anesthetists. However, Prof. Luckhardt quoted statistics showing that there was but one death from it in 332,721 cases.

"It takes more skill to give gas anesthetics (be it nitrous oxide or ethylene) than ether or chloroform by the drop method," Prof. Luckhardt said. "With the same amount of skill it is easier and less fraught with danger to the patient to give ethylene than nitrous oxide since ethylene can be given with more oxygen.

"Gas Anesthesia Conscious"

"The point of particular importance, however, that I wish to make with respect to the introduction of ethylene anesthesia is this: Anesthetists and surgeons and hospital superintendents all over the country became 'gas anesthesia conscious.' The drenching of the patient with ether and even chloroform ceased in the interests chiefly of surgeon and patients. Ether anesthesia will, of course, remain some time and rightly so.

"But the era of possible and unnecessary post-operative pneumonias, ether sickness, gas pains, etc., is, or should be, over. Those who took one or the other exception to ethylene very commonly adopted nitrous oxide. The patient profited by this change of attitude towards ether and that after all is our chief concern.

"Even the explosiveness of the ethylene-oxygen mixture had a salutary effect on operating room construction and operating room practice with respect to the administration of potentially dan-

gerous anesthetics or anesthetic mixtures. The ether fires and explosions have never been given an equal share of publicity. That nitrous oxide-oxygen explosions occur was commonly denied. We had one here in Chicago less than a year ago and, as the irony of fate would have it, in a hospital that refused to introduce and try ethylene because of its explosive properties. In this particular instance the nurse subsequently succumbed from the burns."

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Vegetables packed for Byrd's Antarctic expedition have been dehydrated by a special process developed at the University of Southern California.

In birds that fly the breast bone stands out sharply like a keel, bracing the muscles that operate the wings, while the groundling ostrich has no keel.

When a 1,500 year old palace was unearthed at the ruins of Kish, in Mesopotamia, archaeologists found that it had a fine swimming pool lined with brick.

Blood transfusion was performed as early as 1667, but the importance of matching the blood was not then realized, and the treatment was so frequently fatal that the French parliament prohibited the practice.

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