is higher in the alfentanil than the sufentanil group) and therefore must have been due to an increase in inotropy. As four patients (12 per cent) in the alfentanil group had phenylephrine and calcium, is this increase in ejection fraction representative of the use of these agents? Also, are these the same four patients who were observed to develop anaerobic myocardial metabolism and reduced diastolic compliance?

At least ten per cent more of the patients in the alfentanil group were beta-blocked and at least five per cent more were calcium channel blocked. We wonder if this could have any bearing on the 12 per cent of patients in the alfentanil group requiring vasoconstrictors and inotropes.

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Early ether anaesthesia

To the Editor:

Dr. Titrer's article¹ gives interesting insights into the controversies which followed the introduction of ether anaesthesia by Morton in Boston in October 1846. However, New York City on December 12 was not the only North American city outside Boston in which ether was administered before it was used in London and Paris. The Boston Daily Evening Transcript of November 24, 1846 (Figure) published a report of two amputations, one in Salem and one in Danvers, Massachusetts during which the patients had inhaled "the preparation of Dr. Morton."

It is also possible that ether was used in Halifax, Nova Scotia, by mid-December 1846. News of Morton's use of ether in Boston appeared in a Halifax newspaper as early as November 11, 1846.² Dr. Parker, a leading Halifax surgeon, recalled in his autobiography that "Lawrence VanBuskirk, a dentist, practising in Halifax at the time, as soon as he learned that ether was being used by inhalation there in practical dentistry, with commendable enterprise visited Boston and familiarized himself with its use."³ Early in 1848, the *Royal Gazette* of Halifax reported: "As the attention of the public has in several instances of late been called to the use of Ether and Chloroform, by the medical faculty of this city, it is due to Dr. L.E. VanBuskirk to state that more than a year ago, and before any operations had been performed in England under its influence, or had even found their way into the medical Journals of the United States, he had constructed from a

Evening Transcript.

BOSTON, TUESDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 24, 1846.

NO 3831

The Salem Register relates two cases of amputation, which took place in that city and Danvers last week, under the operation of the preparation of Dr Morton, of this city. The first was that of the young Irish girl, whose arm was so severely mangled on the railroad, on Thursday. The operation was performed by Dr Pierson, of Salem, accompanied by Dr Fisk, who administered the preparation. There was apparently no consciousness of the operation, until near its close when the patient inquired what they were doing; but with inhalation, she was insensible again, and supposed, when she came to, she had been dreaming. The other case was that of Wm A. Osborne, who was injured on the Essex Railroad in the crushing of his foot, by the locomotive running over it. The lower part of the leg was taken off successfully under the operation of the same preparation, administered by Dr Fiske. [Courier.

FIGURE The Boston Daily Evening Transcript, November 24, 1846, report of amputations under "the preparation of Dr. Morton."

diagram sent in a private letter, an inhaler, and was in the constant practice of using the sulph. Ether in dental operations."⁴ However, no reports in November and December, 1846 Halifax newspapers have been found to confirm this claim, so credit for the first British North American (Canadian) anaesthetic must still go to the dentists Adams and George VanBuskirk (Lawrence's brother) in St. John, New Brunswick.⁵

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