

## From Craft to Specialty - A Medical and Social History of Anesthesia and Its Changing Role in Health Care

*David Shephard in association with Alan Sessler, Francis Whalen and Tuhin Roy.*  
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This book written by Dr. Shephard *et al.* is no humbug! I must admit I expected to fully enjoy this comprehensive work, and I was *not* disappointed.

Dr. Shephard, the Canadian Anesthesiologists' Society historian and past archivist, has chosen to present the history of anesthesia by illustrating its evolution from craft to specialty. At the same time, he imparts a thorough analysis of the manner in which this evolution has impacted the practice of medicine. Starting with the birth of anesthesia as a craft based on empirical knowledge, Dr. Shephard effectively tracks the progressive development of anesthesia into a discipline based on art and science and ultimately into a science-based specialty that encompasses formal education, certification, research, organizational structures, and specialty recognition. Within the context of technological advance and social change, he begins this comprehensive account with the rudimentary early stages of pain relief prior to 1800 and continues up to modern day anesthesia practice.

Dr. Shephard's introductory remarks may be of greatest interest to medical historians, since it is here that he delineates and defines his approach to the history of anesthesia and sets the stage for the remainder of the book. The chapters that follow, each of which could stand alone, describe the history of the particular topic with a focus on anesthesiologists' contributions to its evolution and its impact on the practice of medicine. Chapters are devoted to events leading up to the discovery of anesthesia as well as to specialized topics, including control of the airway, local

anesthesia, anesthesia machines, monitoring systems, intensive care, resuscitation, pain management, and the development of subspecialties within anesthesia.

Dr. Shephard has developed an excellent work suitable for a diverse audience. The book includes many illustrations, a glossary of medical terms, and a chronological table of events in the history of anesthesia. Since chapters are devoted to specific topics with extensive referencing and indexing, this book is well-suited as a reference source. Dr. Shephard frequently poses a series of questions to illustrate the importance of examining particular events, and in so doing, he skillfully imparts a sense that he is present and leading the reader along an historical adventure, an occurrence more common during a lecture than in the written word. With Dr. Shephard's occasional injections of humour, many readers will find this book entertaining on a different level; as well, they will appreciate the extent of his expertise, both as a medical historian and anesthesiologist, without which this book would not have been possible.

Although intended primarily for medical historians, this book will be appreciated by anesthesiologists and anyone with an interest in medical advances. I believe this book fills an important niche and is a "must have" for anyone interested in a detailed account of the history of our profession. Congratulations and thank you to Dr. Shephard *et al.* for compiling this information and taking readers on an historical tour that serves to increase their knowledge and their appreciation of the developments in anesthesia and the impact of these developments on health care.

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