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ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS FROM THE WOOD LIBRARY-MUSEUM

Antipodal Views on Branding Amylocaine as Stovaine: Modesty or Political Correctness?



After surgeons revealed in 1904 that researcher Ernest A. Fourneau (1872 to 1949) had synthesized an alternative local anesthetic to cocaine, his Parisian firm, Poulenc Frères, branded his amylocaine as “Stovaine” for their English-speaking consumers. Over the years, that branding has been viewed quite differently by anesthesia museum curators in the southern and northern hemispheres. In Australia, “Stovaine” was characterized by Drs. C. M. Ball and R. N. Westhorpe as “modestly named with an anglicized version of his own name (Fourneau meaning furnace or stove).” However, in the United States, “Stovaine” was viewed as a pragmatic branding, so that Fourneau’s company could avoid peddling the anesthetic with the socially awkward name of “Fourneau-caine.” (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists’ Wood Library–Museum of Anesthesiology.)

George S. Bause, M.D., M.P.H., Honorary Curator and Laureate of the History of Anesthesia, Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology, Schaumburg, Illinois, and Clinical Associate Professor, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio. UJYC@aol.com.