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■ ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS

Wood, Bickley, and Avertin



To facilitate induction and reduce overall dosage of inhalational anesthetics, Drs. Paul M. Wood (1894–1963) and Robert S. Bickley (1885–1957) investigated preliminary sedation and even “basal anesthesia” of patients with tribromethanol, branded Avertin by Winthrop Chemical Company. By 1936 Anesthesiologist Wood and Surgeon Bickley had popularized American use of this agent by publishing their “Observations on use of tribromethanol (Avertin)” in the *American Journal of Surgery*. When Bickley retired, Wood was forced to “semi-retire” to his wife’s family home near West Point, New York, taking with him bottles that he had collected, such as the Avertin one above (courtesy of the Wood Library-Museum). As the bottle label suggests, this “basal anesthetic” was usually administered basally (*i.e., per rectum*), typically to agitated adult and pediatric patients. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc. This image appears in color in the *Anesthesiology Reflections* online collection available at www.anesthesiology.org.)

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