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ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS

Preparing Local Anesthetics with Kersten's Apparatus



On December 21, 1920, Herbert R. Kersten of Boston was granted U.S. Patent No. 1,362,873 for his "Apparatus for Use in Preparing Anesthetics" (above). According to Kersten, prior to his invention, "pills" of dry local anesthetics were dissolved in solutions "brought to boil" in fragile glass or porcelain dishes which were flat enough to waste these expensive agents. He designed his apparatus with a metal cup with a "conical bottom . . . to concentrate the dregs . . . without requiring tilting or other manipulation of the dish" and to facilitate the syringing out of "expensive" local anesthetic as needed. Kersten soon ran a small business empire selling nothing but "dental cups" and his namesake apparatus out of a 6th-floor office of Boston's upscale Washington Building. Components of Kersten's Apparatus may have been scavenged from or supplied by his original office mate, a watch-case repairman! (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc. This image also appears in the *Anesthesiology Reflections* online collection available at www.anesthesiology.org.)

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