Robertson’s Multiple Comminuter

Nowadays, we think of comminuters as devices that pulverize or shred solids. However, back in November of 1895, John Robertson of Cincinnati was granted a U.S. patent for his “Atomizer” (left) that he would advertise as “Robertson’s Multiple Comminuter.” As its corroded nameplate records (right) this “Comminuter” was also patented in Great Britain, France, Germany, and eventually Canada. Robertson eventually perfected a vibrating valve “for administering pulmonary, nasal, or aural massage with scientific accuracy.” With its two to eight colorful glass globes with different liquid contents, Robertson’s Multiple Comminuter was a commercially successful forerunner of nebulizers employed today in respiratory therapy. (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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