Sulphuric Ether as “Salvation Oil”: A 2% Solution “In Place of a Physician”

With labels in English and German, a 2% solution of “SULPH[uric] ETHER” was peddled to rural American families as “Salvation Oil.” Used as an external liniment, this panacea was truly a family affair—it could be applied or rubbed onto the skin of family members or onto the hide of horses, cattle, or other family livestock. In December of 1898, Nebraska’s Cherry County Independent newspaper advertised the use of “Salvation Oil for what it is recommended in place of a physician. It never fails.” (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc.)

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