
ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS

McMunn's Elixir of Opium



By 1837 New York's John B. McMunn, M.D. (ca. 1803–1867), had devised a laudanum alternative by using ether to deodorize opium before combining it with alcohol. "McMunn's Elixir of Opium" became a leading American analgesic and "cure" for the "nervous irritability" of hysteria, epilepsy, tic douloureux, pertussis, rabies, and even tetanus. The elixir's New York proprietors, Abraham B. and David Sands, were both dead by 1862, yet their legacy firm would die-stamp their initials (see above) on labels until 1876, the year after reports surfaced of a toddler's death by elixir overdose "for worms." (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc. This image appears in color in the *Anesthesiology Reflections* online collection available at www.anesthesiology.org.)

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