

## World Anaesthesia Day on 16 October 2021



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World Anaesthesia Day, also known as National Anaesthesia Day or Ether Day, is observed annually on 16 October to commemorate the birth of anaesthesia. On 16 October 1846 at Massachusetts General Hospital, William T.G. Morton administered ether anaesthesia to Edward Gilbert Abbott (1825-1855) (Haridas 2017). Dr John Collins Warren (Hersey Professor of Anatomy and Surgery at Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA) was then able to surgically remove a vascular neck tumour painlessly. This first public demonstration of ether anaesthesia marks a significant event in medical history. This success led to rapid progress in surgical medicine because patients could now undergo surgical treatment without the pain associated with an operation.

'Ether Day' is celebrated annually by the World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists (WFSA) with special events. This year will mark the 175th anniversary of the event. Around 134 societies representing anaesthesiologists from over 150 countries take part in the celebrations.

The WFSA uses this day to highlight a global shortage in the anaesthesia workforce, which translates into surgical operation, labour analgesia, and critical care gap (WFSA 2021). There is currently less than one anaesthesia provider per 100,000 population in most countries in Africa and South-East Asia, compared to 15–30 anaesthesiologists per 100,000 in North America and Western Europe (Firth and Evans 2021). Thus, there's a deep disparity in the number of trained anaesthesia providers worldwide, along with an inability to treat surgical conditions where providers are unavailable. In the light of this ongoing neglect, WFSA celebrates global awareness days like World Anaesthesia Day since they can be a powerful advocacy tool to mobilise political will, educate the public, and showcase the achievements of the global anaesthesia community.

Published on : Sat, 9 Oct 2021