



## **An MGH Tradition, Striving to Conquer Pain:**

Shortly after the first public demonstration of ether during surgery at Massachusetts General Hospital on October 16, 1846; the People's Journal in London proclaimed, "We Have Conquered Pain." Indeed, ether was a safer, more effective option than standard alternatives available at that time. High dose opium had significant side effects and was not powerful enough to completely blunt a surgical stimulus; while the large doses of alcohol needed to produce the desired stuporous state were likely to cause nausea, vomiting and death instead of sleep. Ether effectively produced a state of diminished consciousness, which by today's standards is not considered a successful conquest of pain.



After many innovations at Massachusetts General Hospital that changed the way anesthesia and pain control are provided, we continue this tradition of striving to conquer pain. Using the 21st century vision of optimal biopsychosocial functioning with minimal adverse effects as our measure of success, we are investigating non-addictive alternatives to opioids, novel treatments and integrative approaches to best understand and control pain.