The «History of Anaesthesia VII» is the seventh volume of its kind following a series of very successful publications of the International Symposia on the History of Anaesthesia organised for the first time in 1982 in Rotterdam, and since then every four to five years in different parts of the world. These Symposia discuss evidence about past initiatives and foster research about how earlier scientists thought and worked. The present volume contains the Proceedings of the 7th Symposium held in Heraklion, Greece in 2009. It is a collection of essays related to the history of anaesthesia, from individual contributors and not a narrative account of the evolution of anaesthesia as such.

The historical evolution of analgesia and anaesthesia from empiricism and experimentation to its impressive present-day development, from the first desperate attempts of man to relieve the pain of trauma and disease, back to the roots of contemporary anaesthesia – one and a half centuries ago – is fascinating. The long journey – from the beginnings of recorded history to the last decades – follows the transition and transformation of the history of medicine, which replaced theocratic dogmas and philosophical speculations with rational scientific thought. This diachronic dimension of history, which highlights the process of how the discipline of anaesthesiology reached its current scientific significance, is also expressed in the Proceedings of the 7th International Symposium on the History of Anaesthesia.

The essays included in this volume are assembled chronologically in five historical periods, from antiquity to modern times: Greek Antiquity, Early Modern Era, 19th century, 20th century and also in a separate section on the Pioneers of Anaesthesia. The information presented covers an impressive variety of facts and practices, displaying the evolutionary journey of analgesia and anaesthesia from antiquity to the twentieth century.