

April 25, 1961

Mr. Fred R. Ingram, Chairman
Occupational Health Section, A.P.H.A.
90 Panoramic Way
Walnut Creek
California

Dear Ingram:

Your letter of March 10th has gone unanswered until I could work my way out of a series of urgent tasks and editorial commitments. I am still under pressure but I can breathe more freely. This enables me to reply to your letter, but not to do anything very soon about the issue which it has raised again. I say "again" because the matter of the A.P.H.A. report on Occupational Lead Exposure and Lead Poisoning has been under discussion for the past two or three years.

I appreciate Mr. Elder's concern about the exhaustion of the supply of the earlier report. I am entirely willing to share my supply with him. I can spare ten (10) copies if he so desires, and while this will not solve the problem, it may give him some temporary relief.

Now as to the problem of the revision of the booklet. I have been trying to get at this job for the past two years. During that time, I have had such a heavy load of editorial work (in addition to other duties which cannot be sidestepped) that it has been quite impossible for me even to start the revision. I had thought of doing this alone, in the first instance, and then submitting it to the Section or to any committee or editorial group which the officers of the Section might wish to create for the purpose. I now propose this as the best contribution which I can make to the Section in its solution of this problem.

This proposal is probably a very unusual one for the Section to consider, and it may not be acceptable. I shall be quite frank, however, in making it and in giving my reasons for making it. The former Committee is no longer acceptable, and while I can make certain suggestions for a new Committee, and will do so if necessary, I would find it much easier and expeditious to go to work on this booklet by myself, with the assistance of our library staff, than to write various members of a Committee, assign bits of the work to them, revise and co-ordinate their contributions, assemble the material for resubmission to them, and take care of the final editing. I have been through this and I don't look forward to it with anything but dismay. I do not like to speak so bluntly, but with but few exceptions, the present bulletin is my work; the contribution of the other members of the Committee, except for certain limited bits of critique, were almost negligible. Belknap and Aub provided some help in criticizing and pointing up some parts of the clinical descriptions. Dreesen and Yant helped with other parts of it. Gehrman read and commented on the complete text. There were no other contributors

or contributions, and Dr. Mayer, I regret to say, was a hindrance rather than a help. (Please don't quote me for she is a nice person, and I would not hurt her feelings). I am put to the necessity of explaining my proposal. No living member of this group has contributed anything useful to this subject since this booklet was prepared, and I would not suggest any one of them as a member of a new Committee. I can think of several people who could make suggestions and offer criticisms, and some such Committee might take the manuscript from me, and give it a good going over,

My main reason for "sticking out my neck" in this manner, is that the work done in this Laboratory since the publication of the original report, is the principal reason and basis for the revision of the booklet. During this period we have investigated the metabolism of lead in man in great detail, and have provided the greater portion of the physiological information on which modern standards of safety, and present methods of laboratory diagnosis are derived. Much of this work (in detail) has not been published, but I have spent some months in assembling it for publication (as a series of lectures given in London last October). This had to be done (it is not finished but is well on the way) before anything else, and I am very much relieved that it is largely behind me. This is not to suggest that there have not been other important contributions to the problem of lead poisoning. I am fully aware that this is not the case. On the other hand we have maintained a bibliography of virtually the world's literature on this subject over the years, and this is the place at which the work on this booklet should be done.

I can now see my way reasonably clear to getting at this job in the autumn of this year. It cannot be finished by the end of 1961, for I haven't that much time to devote to it, but it can be well on the way.

If my suggestion is acceptable to the officers of the Section, let me know and I shall act accordingly. If it is not acceptable, I shall be prepared to consider an alternate procedure, and will let you know what I can do.. I do not wish to be arbitrary, but for some four or five years prior to 1961, I have given such amounts of my time to professional work outside of my primary job as greatly to subtract from my fulfillment of my responsibilities to my own staff. This appeared to be necessary, and I have done it without stint. The effects have caught up with me, however, in more ways than one, and I can no longer be profligate with either my time or my energy.

Please keep to yourself my remarks about members of the former Committee, for no useful purpose is served by spreading them about. If they provide a reasonable basis for my attitude they will have served my purpose, and if they do not, they are best forgotten.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.

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