

February 8, 1940

Dr. Sullivan G. Bedell
512 Greenleaf Building
Jacksonville, Florida

Dear Doctor Bedell:-

The description of the case of intoxication in your letter of February 3rd is an unusual one. It does not fit into the customary clinical picture of gasoline intoxication as I have seen it. Therefore I am disposed to believe that there were certain additional factors in this man's illness. Just what these additional factors were, it is not easy at this time to say. The distension and the cyanosis which you speak of give me some suspicion that this man may have been exposed to toxic concentrations of hydrogen sulphide in addition to gasoline vapors. This, however, is by no means certain and the necropsy report does not give any supporting evidence.

One thing in the necropsy report is also somewhat questionable in its significance. One would gather from the microscopic examination of the brain that there had been some type of cerebral inflammation. Just what could have produced the lymphocytic infiltration, which is described, is somewhat beyond my powers of deduction. Considering the history of exposure, there are certain factors in the clinical picture which are suggestive, but by no means conclusive, of lead absorption. This point in the picture interests me very much indeed, and before making any further comments on the case, I should like to do whatever can be done toward the study of this question. It occurs to me that the pathologist may have portions of the organs of this unfortunate man, and if he has, we should still be able to determine whether or not lead could be regarded as a significant factor in his illness and death. With this idea in mind, I should appreciate it very much if you would see whether you could obtain for us some bits of this man's tissues. We could make use of anything that is available for analysis since our methods are very delicate, but it would be highly desirable if we could have pieces up to 100 grams of the liver, kidneys, brain or whatever else remains. If these tissues are available in the pathologist's laboratory, and if they are immersed in some fixing solution, it will also be desirable to send us some of the fixing solution in order

that we may examine its lead content as a check on the possibility of the contamination of the tissues. If we should find significant quantities of lead in these tissues, I should want to make a very comprehensive investigation of the whole set of conditions under which this man worked. If, on the other hand, they should be negative or normal in their lead content, this factor will be eliminated and we can then give serious consideration to the possibility of other intoxicants. It is possible, of course, that this whole picture was produced by gasoline intoxication, and yet the outcome was so unusual that I should be loathe to arrive at this diagnosis, except by the process of exclusion.

In conclusion I hope you will be able to obtain some tissues for us, because I have a great deal more than the mere academic interest in this case.

Very truly yours,

PAK:ls

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.

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