

February 14, 1940

Dr. Druz Coke
Providencia 153
Santiago
Chile

Dear Doctor Coke:-

I have no doubt that by this time you have returned to Santiago. I am very sorry that I did not have the opportunity to see you in Cincinnati and to discuss with you a number of matters of practical importance in connection with your handling of the medical affairs of the Associated Ethyl Company Ltd., in Chile. I should also have like to acquaint you with the work of this laboratory and the medical activities in Cincinnati. Nevertheless I can well understand that you may not have had the time or opportunity to visit us.

There is a matter which I should like to bring to your attention, and about which I should like to have some information. Some time ago I came across the article of Dr. Valentin Gallinatto y Dr. Osvaldo Esquível: Revista Chilena de Higiene y Medicina Preventiva Vol. 1, No. 7-9, Julio-September 1938. I was very much surprised to find that certain symptomatic and physical findings were reported which were interpreted as evidence of lead intoxication. It seems quite incredible that these symptoms were believed to be due to lead absorption since the opportunities of exposure of these workmen were negligible both from the point of view of frequency and volume of their mixing operations, as well as their exposure to gasoline containing tetraethyl lead. I am constrained to believe that the criteria of intoxication which were accepted, were inadequate from the point of view of differential diagnosis. Moreover I went over the information obtained on the analyses of the excreta of normal individuals as well as these exposed workmen, and found them so variable and so high as to be unacceptable as evidence of the facts which they were intended to portray. I am quite sure, for example, that normal individuals in Chile do not show the lead content reported in these cases. That is, these figures are impossibly high and I am quite certain that they are the result of insufficient care in the collection of the samples, or else are the result of inaccurate analytical procedures.

I would appreciate very much your comments on this entire matter, since if this report

is accepted as valid, all that I and my associates have said on this subject can be regarded as incorrect. As a matter of fact, I am entirely certain from our enormous body of data that it is quite impossible for individuals to absorb significant quantities of lead as the result of their contact with gasoline containing the commercial concentrations of tetraethyl lead. If you will review our data on this question in the articles which I furnished you, you will see at least a part of the basis for this opinion.

Please let me know what you think of this entire situation and also what is likely to be the effect of this article on hygienic opinion in Chile and in other South American states.

Cordially yours,

RAK:ls

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.

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