

October 4, 1947

Mr. A. R. Allen,
(Vesta Battery Company Pty. Ltd.),
c/o Biltmore Hotel,
Los Angeles, Calif.

Dear Mr. Allen:

Your letter of September 29 concerning information of lead poisoning, in relation to the storage battery industry, would have received a reply from me in any case. However, your remark that you could find very little information in the United States relating to lead poisoning has piqued my interest more than a little, since there has been a veritable flood of publications on this subject in the United States within the past ten years. I am a little surprised, therefore that you have not found a very considerable amount of information. I am trying to remedy the defect by sending you under separate cover in care of the Biltmore Hotel a series of reprints of articles published from this Laboratory, with reference to the work of others in this country and elsewhere. I am also sending you a report, prepared by a Committee of the American Public Health Association, of which I had the honor to be chairman, which summarizes the information available in this field at the present time, including that made available most recently. I think you will find this to be helpful in getting at modern concepts of the disease and, more particularly, modern concepts as to the means of preventing it. I should be inclined to say that our knowledge of this subject has been advanced more during the past ten years than during the previous half century. It is now quite possible to say what are the limits of safety, for all practical purposes, in occupational exposure to a variety of lead compounds.

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I am fairly familiar with the attitude of the health authorities in your part of the earth, and especially in New South Wales, with respect to the public health problem of lead exposure and lead absorption. On the other hand, I am not at all familiar with the conditions that exist in the hazardous lead trades, and it would be more than a little interesting to me to have some idea of the practical problems faced by your industry, and the means by which the problems are being attacked. My knowledge of the situation in the United States, in the lead trades, leads me to feel that the manufacture of storage batteries represents one of our most serious industrial lead hazards. It is also my feeling that the hazards are not as well controlled in this country as they should be and as they could be on the basis of the available information. In some respects, at least, and in some places with which I am familiar, this job has been better handled in Great Britain than in the United States. I am not prepared to say that this is

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true generally, for I do not know. However, I should be very much interested in knowing how well the job is done by your people in Australia. If you should find the time to write to me after your return, and to state your problems, and the means by which you undertake to meet them, I should be very grateful to you.

I should like to close by saying that information is now available which should make it entirely feasible to protect men engaged in the lead trades against illness and impairment of their health as a consequence of lead absorption. If this is not done generally, it is due to the failure to apply present knowledge, rather than to the lack of adequate knowledge on the subject. I may say further that we have no "cure" for the disease. Actually spontaneous cure results in most instances after hazardous exposure is discontinued. Otherwise the cure lies in the prevention of dangerous absorption of lead.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

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Reprints under separate cover.

Occupational Lead Exposure and Lead Poisoning
Methods for Determining Lead in Air and in Biological Materials
Influence of Dithiopropanol (BAL) on Human Lead Metabolism
Exposure to Lead
The Concentrations of Certain Trace Metals in Drinking Water
Lead Poisoning Symposium
The Effects of Ascorbic Acid in Relation to Lead Absorption
The Plasma-Cell Partition of Blood Lead
1940 - Editorial Review - Manganese, Lead, Tin, Aluminum, Copper and Silver in Normal Biological Material
A Spectrochemical Study of the Normal Ranges of Concentration of Certain Trace Metals in Biological Materials
Experimental Studies on the Ingestion of Lead Compounds
Lead Absorption from Bullets Lodged in Tissues
Lead Poisoning - from Unusual Causes

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