

RIKER LABORATORIES, INC.

G. L. MAISON, M.D.
PRESIDENT

POST OFFICE BOX 3157 TERMINAL ANNEX
LOS ANGELES 54, CALIFORNIA

6 APRIL 1955

DR. ROBERT KEHOE
THE KETTERING LABORATORY
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE
EATON AVENUE
CONCINATTI 19
OHIO

DEAR BOB:

YOUR LONG LETTER OF 30 MARCH 1955 WAS DEEPLY APPRECIATED. MAY I FIRST SAY THAT NEITHER I NOR ANYONE AT RIKER TOOK ANY UMBRAGE AT YOUR RECENT LETTER TO THE A.M.A.. WE DID NOT FEEL THAT YOU WERE THROWING BARBS AT RIKER OR AT US PERSONALLY.

I ASSUME THAT YOU HAVE SEEN A COPY OF NORMAN KARR'S ANSWERING LETTER TO THE A.M.A. WHICH I HOPE THEY WILL PUBLISH, BUT IN CASE YOU HAVE NOT, I APPEND A COPY OF IT. IT WOULD INDEED BE A SORRY WORLD IF PEOPLE LIKE YOU AND I COULD NOT HAVE THE STRONGEST DIFFERENCE OF OPINION ON MATTERS OF MEDICAL FACT OR MORALS, WITHOUT THE DIFFERENCE INTERFERING WITH OUR FRIENDSHIP.

I WOULD LIKE TO STATE WHAT I THINK IS THE CRUX OF OUR DIFFERENCE OF OPINION. AS I SEE IT, YOU ARE SAYING — ORAL CALCIUM DISODIUM VERSENATE SHOULD NOT BE USED IN ANY CASE BECAUSE EVEN IF IT IMPROVES LEAD EXCRETION, IT WILL HAVE A DELETED EFFECT UPON PROPHYLAXIS AGAINST LEAD EXPOSURE IN INDUSTRY. ON THE OTHER HAND, I FEEL THAT IF IT WILL REMOVE LEAD EFFECTIVELY, IT SHOULD BE USED IN THOSE PEOPLE WHO SHOW A HIGH BLOOD LEAD, EVEN THOUGH THEY MAY HAVE NO SYMPTOMS AT THE MOMENT. THIS MIGHT BE CALLED A PROPHYLAXIS AGAINST SYMPTOMATIC EXACERBATION. THIS IS THE ONLY KIND OF PROPHYLAXIS WHICH I FEEL IS ACCEPTABLE AND MORAL. I DEFINITELY DO NOT NOW AND NEVER HAVE FELT THAT NORMAL PEOPLE IN INDUSTRY SHOULD TAKE THIS DRUG IN ANTICIPATION OF BEING EXPOSED OR WHILE THEY ARE BEING EXPOSED TO LEAD. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT IT WAS UNFORTUNATE THAT THE TERM PROPHYLAXIS WAS USED AT ALL, SINCE PROPHYLAXIS AGAINST EXACERBATION IS SO READILY CONFUSED WITH PROPHYLAXIS AGAINST LEAD ACCUMULATION BEFORE OR DURING THE FACT.

A SECOND DIFFERENCE OF OPINION IS OVER A QUESTION OF FACT. FROM YOUR LETTER I GATHER THAT YOU WERE TAKEN IN BY THE EXPERIMENTAL DATA OF RIEDER ON THE RABBIT. THIS WAS, AT BEST, A POOR EXPERIMENT SINCE THE RABBITS DID NOT HAVE A DISEASE ANALOGOUS TO THE HUMAN DISEASE, THEIR METABOLISM DOES NOT RESEMBLE HUMAN METABOLISM IN THESE REGARDS, SOME OF THE METHODS USED WERE A LITTLE LESS THAN ACCEPTABLE, AND THE DURATION OF THE EXPERIMENT WAS OPEN TO CRITICISM. FURTHER WORK BY RIEDER HIMSELF AND AT LEAST TWO OTHER LABORATORIES DO NOT IN ANY SENSE CONFIRM

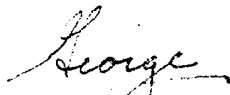
THAT MAN BEHAVES THE WAY RIEDER'S RABBITS SEEM TO BEHAVE. PRESENT EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THAT ORAL CALCIUM DISODIUM VERSENATE WILL INCREASE THE OVER-ALL EXCRETION OF LEAD IN PATIENTS WITH A HIGH BLOOD LEAD AND NOT TAKE THE LEAD OUT OF THE ALIMENTARY TRACT AND PUT IT OUT THROUGH THE KIDNEYS.

IN THIS QUESTION OF FACT, OBVIOUSLY TIME AND THE PUBLICATION OF PAPERS WILL EVENTUALLY BRING US TO THE SAME POINT OF VIEW. IN THE OTHER QUESTION OF JUDGEMENT, MORALS, ETC., IT MAY WELL BE THAT WE WILL CONTINUE TO STAND APART. I SHALL HAVE NO TROUBLE RESPECTING YOUR VIEW OR CONTINUING TO HAVE A GREAT FONDNESS FOR THE MAN WHO GENERATED THAT POINT OF VIEW. I SINCERELY HOPE YOU WILL FEEL THE SAME WAY. I HOPE ALSO THAT YOU FOUND NO CAUSE FOR UMBRAGE IN NORM KARR'S LETTER.

IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE WE HAVE HAD A QUIET EVENING TOGETHER AND I HAVE VERY PLEASANT RECOLLECTIONS OF THE ONES WE HAD BEFORE. I SINCERELY HOPE THAT SOME BUSINESS WILL BRING YOU TO LOS ANGELES AND ALLOW YOU A RESPITE TO PUT YOUR FEET UP AT OUR HOUSE.

WITH KINDEST PERSONAL REGARDS, I AM,

SINCERELY YOURS,


GEORGE L. MAISON

GLM:MEW

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March 30, 1955

Dr. George L. Maison
Vice President and General Manager
Riker Laboratories, Inc.
P. O. Box 3157, Terminal Annex
Los Angeles 54, California

Dear Doctor Maison:

A recent note from Manfred Bowditch, plus some previous comments that have come to my attention from other sources, have indicated that some of our colleagues believe or assume that my recent editorial in the JAMA was directed at your group in the Riker Laboratories. I should like to disclaim any such purpose or attitude on my part, for if I had had anything of that type on my mind, I would first have directed it to you. There may be others who believe that your group is open to criticism, and they may be right, in terms of the possible or potential effects of the promulgation of the broad use of the versenate for prophylactic purposes, but that was not the point of my remarks, and I had and have no knowledge of any activity on your part that deserved my criticism.

My purpose was and remains devoted to the discouragement of the use of any medical treatment of industrial workmen as a substitute for sound measures of industrial hygiene. None of us has any justification for participating in any activity that will have that effect. I am so well acquainted with the lead trades and with the problems which they present and with the means by which these problems can be handled, that I said what I did without reservation and in the full knowledge that I am right, medically, morally and humanly speaking. I was directing my remarks at a group of industrial physicians, who through ignorance, insensitivity of social conscience, or sheer callousness to human welfare, are willing to pander to the wishes of uninformed or irresponsible industrial management. There is no present excuse for the continued existence of dangerous exposure to lead in American industry. Accidental and unforeseen absorption of lead will continue to occur in our complicated society, but satisfactory methods of controlling exposure to lead in the conventional lead trades of the USA are available and are being used by competent and responsible industrial organizations.

This is what I was attempting, primarily, to say as simply and as directly as I knew how, and am not at all happy at being thought to have been

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speaking to any other purpose. It is true, as I said, that the evidence for the use of the drug safely is not available, at least to me. But if it can be shown that it is entirely harmless, of itself, in this use, I am still bitterly opposed to such use to palliate the effects of hazardous exposure to lead in industry. Moreover, I know that if its prophylactic use is widely and unreservedly encouraged, even in justifiable situations for which no one is knowingly to blame, it will be employed as a justification for the medical protection of men who should have adequate environmental protection. This is a matter in which the consciences of medical men will have to remain sensitive, or we are in for a relapse in the present encouraging and much too long delayed application of sound standards and practices of industrial hygiene.

I have felt that this statement of my position was due you and your associates as well as due myself, in view of the personal and professional amenities which should prevail between us, and which I should like to preserve.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

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