

November 14, 1960

Miss Erma A. Hinek
Consumers' Research, Inc.
Washington, New Jersey

Dear Miss Hinek:

Your note of November 7th to the Health Department of Cincinnati concerning the occurrence of two cases of lead poisoning in association with the use of a certain brand of table-ware was referred to me by the Acting Commissioner, Dr. R. E. Wehr, as his letter of November 10th has indicated.

The two persons involved were members of our institutional family, so to speak, in that one is a young woman, a technical assistant in the Department of Internal Medicine, and the other, her husband, is an undergraduate student in this Medical College. I shall not go into detail in this account which enters into the private lives of these two, other than to say that following their marriage and honeymoon, they returned to their new apartment and after about one month both became ill. Some considerable investigation was required to establish the exact nature of their illness and the source of their joint exposure to lead. This part of the problem was mine to solve, after having been consulted, and this resulted in the conviction of the table-ware as the only source of the exposure.

Incidentally, Dr. Wehr knew of this situation which was reported to him informally in connection with the local problem. (He has simply forgotten the matter, which did not call for any action on the part of the local Health Department.) I reported the facts to the local distributors of the table-ware, and later discussed the matter with the owners of the pottery and with officials of the Health Department of the State of California. I also supplied the latter with the documentary evidence concerning the cases and the source of the exposure to lead.

We have since examined other samples of the same table-ware from other local owners. Quite a flurry of concern has arisen (naturally enough) out of this episode, and we have done what we could do to assist the various persons concerned in dealing with their problem locally and in California. I have not been informed in any full or precise manner as to the action taken by the California State Health Department, but I gave them my advice and I have confidence in their ability and willingness to deal with the matter effectively. The matter was reported by them to the State and Territorial Health Officers in the meeting of the latter group in San Francisco recently.

This situation resulted, apparently, from the lack of technical knowledge

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on the part of the manufacturers of this product, with particular reference to the necessary characteristics of a glaze. This, in my experience, is a most unusual occurrence in this country. I do not, on this account, have any great anxiety about the bulk of the tableware made or used in this country. Incidentally this matter has been reported to the U.S. Public Health Service, whose knowledge of somewhat similar situations is also sufficient to indicate their rarity.

If I can give you further useful information concerning the tableware, I shall do so. I realize fully the hygienic and legal significance of this matter, especially as it involves other users of the same tableware in various parts of the country, and only for this reason have I disclosed to others, and to you, as well, information of a privileged professional type in my recital of the facts concerning the two patients. I trust that you will exercise every reasonable discretion in its use. Considering the importance of the matter, those of us who have been involved directly in this situation, and in the care of these patients, plan to publish a fairly full account of the cases with the necessary documentary evidence now that the patients are fully recovered.

Very truly yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

RAK:ss

cc: R. E. Wehr, M.D.

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14, 1960

November 10, 1960

Miss Erma A. Hinek
Consumers' Research, Inc.
Washington, New Jersey

Dear Miss Hinek:

Your letter of November 7, 1960 was received at this office and referred to Dr. Robert Kehoe, Director of the Kettering Laboratory, here in Cincinnati.

We were not aware of the incident which you mentioned, here, at the Cincinnati Health Department, and felt that the industrial laboratories at Kettering might have some information on it.

Sincerely,

R. E. Wehr, M.D., M.P.H.
Acting Health Commissioner

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WASHINGTON, NEW JERSEY

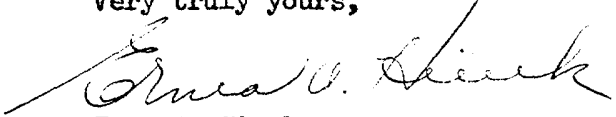
November 7, 1960

Director, City Health Department
Cincinnati
Ohio

Dear Sir:

One of our readers has sent us a clipping from a Los Angeles, California newspaper indicating that there were "two well-authenticated cases of lead intoxication in a Cincinnati couple due to routine use of this dinnerware." We would very much appreciate your letting us have any information you can about these two cases. We are interested since we understand that the dinnerware involved was Cerama Stone produced by the Laurel Pottery Manufacturing Company of Stockton, California. Ware of this make was included in a study of dinnerware that we made last year.

Very truly yours,


Erma A. Hinek

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