

Dr. Eduardo Cruz-Coke
Santiago, Chile

November 27, 1941.

AIR MAIL

Dr. Eduardo Cruz-Coke,
Santiago,
Chile.

Dear Dr. Cruz-Coke:

I have had some difficulty in finding the references to the changes in lead metabolism incident to toxic states of pregnancy, referred to in your letter of August 19. This will explain the long delay in replying. In fact, I have not been able to find any reference to investigations along this line made in California. I have found an article entitled, "Lead Mobilization Accompanying Toxemia of Pregnancy", by Letinoff and his associates, in Philadelphia, in the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Vol. 40, Page 1017, December 1940. I believe you have access to this journal, but if you do not and will let me know, I will try to obtain a reprint for you. I am not altogether convinced by the data which are presented. It seems quite possible to me that excessive lead absorption might induce difficulties during pregnancy, and I think there is very little question that under these circumstances a number of associated difficulties might occur, such as uterine bleeding, and perhaps, even abortion. I am very skeptical as to the likelihood of "mobilization" of lead as the result of the toxemia itself. It has been shown that persons in the general population may occasionally absorb considerable quantities of lead from a variety of sources. I believe that the excretory figures given by these writers might well be the result of the inclusion within their group of patients, a number of persons with abnormal lead absorption, and, therefore, abnormal lead excretion. The results obtained by analyzing the blood of the patients with toxemia of pregnancy were quite variable - some of them being high, but some of them also being low. The mean value was high, because of the larger proportion of high values.

I may say also that the analytical method used in this work was not of the best, and it seems entirely possible that a number of high results crept into the figures on this account. In short, I think it would take a great deal more work to substantiate the position that the toxemia of pregnancy is associated with the release of lead from the tissues into the blood and the excreta.

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It is possible that we have missed other articles on this subject, and since you mentioned particularly some investigations in California, this seems even more likely. Nevertheless, our references are fairly complete, I believe, and it seems that we ought to be able to find reference to any such articles, if they have been published.

I should be very glad to receive the data mentioned in your letter, and, in fact, I should be glad to hear from you on any account.

I trust that your political activities are not interfering too much with your professional and scientific activities.

Please convey to Mrs. Cruz-Coke the kindest regards of Mrs. Kehoe and myself. We hope to have an opportunity some time to return your hospitality.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

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