

May 31, 1980

Dr. J. S. Long
P.O. Box 593
New Albany, Ind.

Dear Doctor Long:

Mr. Cholak, to whom you addressed your letter of May 27, handed it to me, since I have had the direct responsibility for the biological and toxicologic work of this Laboratory in this field throughout the years of its existence. Mr. Cholak has contributed extensively to this work as the head of the division concerned with the engineering aspects of industrial hygiene and the development and application of the analytical methods in this field. We have been in fairly close touch with the national organization of the Paint and Varnish Manufacturers in relation to the present problem of lead poisoning in childhood, as well as to certain other problems of these industries.

This Laboratory has been involved intensively and extensively with the general problem of lead poisoning in industry and in the community as a whole, for many years, and in the latter relationship it has been concerned with the study of lead poisoning among small children. This, I should point out, is not limited to Baltimore and New York, but extends throughout the cities - certainly all of the older cities, including those in your vicinity - in the United States. For example we have followed this situation in Cincinnati for twenty-five years. We had some seventy cases of actual or suspected lead poisoning in the hospitals of this city in 1959. Comparable numbers of cases (in relation to the population in the older housing areas) occur in other cities in which case-finding facilities exist. I am sending you a brief report of an investigation of one aspect - a very minor one - of this problem, with some discussion of the epidemiologic and etiologic backgrounds of the matter.

The history of this situation, as it has occurred in various parts of the world, is fairly well known. The literature has been covered adequately, and the toxicologic and clinical aspects of the disease in children have been explored with care and thoroughness. Nothing further is needed to provide an understanding of the immediate problem, and the thing that most needs to be done is to find the means of prevention. Your suggestion #2 is also behind us. Since the late thirties, satisfactory methods of micro-analysis have been available. (I am sending you a report issued by the American Public Health Association, prepared by Mr. Cholak, with some help from me on the methods of sampling, in which you will find detailed descriptions of methods, with notations of their sensitivity and accuracy.

As to additional toxicologic work, we are far beyond the stage of animal experimentation, and it is hardly to be expected that much more light will

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be thrown on the subject by that means. The present work on the metabolism of lead in the human being, which has been under way in this Laboratory for more than twenty years, is now concerned mainly with the examination of the fate of inhaled lead in various forms in the human body. This has little to do directly with lead poisoning in childhood, which arises from the ingestion of lead, largely in the form of paint, by children in the early years of life (mainly children from one to three or four years of age). Never the less it bears on the subject, since all sources of absorption are involved.

We would be glad to enlist the help of the Paint Research Institute in the attack on the prevention of lead poisoning among children, and would be delighted to discuss this with you at a mutually convenient time. Unfortunately, I shall be going abroad shortly to deal with another international problem in this general field and will not have returned until the middle of July. Meanwhile, if you wish to discuss the situation with my associates before I return, Mr. Cholak and Dr. Lee Miller will be glad, I am sure, to meet and talk with you. A telephone call to Mr. Cholak, as you have suggested, will make this possible. The telephone number of the Medical College is Avon 1-2568; Mr. Cholak's extension is 332 - 333, and Dr. Miller's extension is 305 - 306. Either of these men will be familiar with this correspondence, and will arrange to meet you and acquaint you with the work which we have done and are doing.

You will be interested to know that one of the members of our staff, Dr. Mitchell Zavon, has been in touch with some of the people in Louisville who have reason to be interested in this problem there. We know that it exists there, and we have expressed our willingness to aid them in learning of its extent and severity there, and in taking steps to control it. We have had no financial support for our work on this part of the general problem of lead poisoning, and we could move more rapidly and more effectively if such support, engendered by a lively interest in doing something about this serious problem of public health, could be found.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

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cc: Mr. J. Cholak
Dr. Lee Miller

Enclosures

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