

March 18, 1938

Dr. A. J. Lanza
Assistant Medical Director
Metropolitan Life Insurance Co.
New York City
New York

Dear Doctor Lanza:-

I am afraid that there is very little I can give you in the way of new information as to the influence of lead poisoning on mortality. Nothing that I have on the subject is worth anything in a statistical sense since I have only my own experiences in the matter of clinical cases to go on, and these, I believe, would be of very little assistance to you. In the course of the past several years I have seen several fatal cases of lead poisoning in children as the result of ingesting lead from toys, play pens, and in one instance contaminated food. I have also seen several cases of fatal encephalopathy in connection with the manufacture of white lead. I have also had direct knowledge of six or seven deaths from acute organic lead poisoning in connection with the cleaning of storage tanks heavily contaminated with tetraethyl lead or its decomposition products. I can not conceive of these as having much significance in relation to the general question of mortality. My experience leads me to believe that fatal lead poisoning is quite uncommon and aside from the instances which I have mentioned, I believe that fatal cases occur rarely except in connection with ship breaking or cutting operations in which an oxyacetylene blowtorch is used on a heavily painted surface under conditions in which ventilation is lacking, or very inadequate.

The only man I know who has systematically collected data on this subject is one of my colleagues on the Committee on Lead Poisoning in the Section of Industrial Hygiene of the American Public Health Association. I have no doubt you are familiar with some of Dr. Hoffman's publications and I believe he has the data on this question in better shape than almost anyone else in so far as available statistics are concerned. I personally doubt the

KE 00889

accuracy of the statistics and in any case my impression is that they show little evidence of a significance of lead poisoning in mortality tables.

If I can be of any assistance to you in getting Dr. Hoffman's reports, do not hesitate to let me know.

Sincerely yours,

RAK:is

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.