

MEDICINE

May 12, 1964

Dr. A. G. Oettle
Head: Cancer Research Unit of the
National Cancer Association of S.A.
The South African Institute for
Medical Research
P. O. Box 1038
Johannesburg, South Africa

Dear Doctor Oettle:

I have just received your letter of May 5th, and I hasten to invite you to visit us in Cincinnati in the latter part of the month of June.

On the question of whether your visit would be profitable to you in connection with your specific interests, you will have to make your own decision. We are engaged now, as we have been for many years, in the investigation of certain aspects of the problem of cancer. I am not much impressed by the likelihood that either kerosene or lead have any very significant association with cancer. Petroleum products, in general, are under a degree of suspicion in this relationship, for obvious reasons, and I would not deny that these reasons may be valid. I do not think they are, however.

As to the relationship of lead compounds to any form of human cancer, I have never found any evidence. Indeed, a reverse effect (inhibitory) seems more likely to be the case. I am aware of some of the experimental work which has shown - or has appeared to show - that the absorption of appreciable quantities of lead by the rat (perhaps by certain strains of rats) is associated with a relatively high incidence of malignant tumors of the kidney. This, in itself, has little significance to me. In saying this, I realize full well that the lack of evidence of a relationship between lead absorption (as it is seen in industry) and malignant disease of the kidney (or elsewhere), is not decisive for a number of reasons, but I repeat that I am not aware of any presently available evidence that any positive association exists. I am sure that this is worthy of investigation, but this is not the direction of our concern about lead compounds at this time.

Despite the tenor of the preceding paragraph, I can assure you that we shall be pleased to have you visit us, and explore what we are doing.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.

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THE SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH.
DIE SUID-AFRIKAANSE INSTITUUT VIR MEDIESE NAVORSING.

P.O. BOX 1038
POSBUS

TEL. ADR.:
"BACTERIA"

HOSPITAL ST.,
HOSPITAALSTR.,
JOHANNESBURG,

SOUTH AFRICA/SUID-AFRIKA

IN REPLY PLEASE QUOTE REFERENCE NO.
GELIEWE MET ANTWOORD TE VERWYS NR.

5th May, 1964.

Dr. R. H. Kehoe,
Kettering Laboratories,
Department of Preventive Medicine and
Industrial Health College of Medicine,
University of Cincinnati,
CINCINNATI 19,
O H I O, U.S.A.

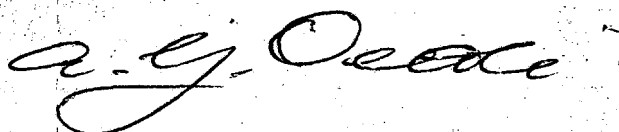
Dear Dr. Kehoe,

I have noticed with great interest the symposium on lead which has recently been published by Archives of Environmental Health. I hope to be in Toronto up till June, 18th if all goes according to plan and I have wondered whether it would be profitable to visit your laboratory just after this date.

I shall briefly outline my interest and perhaps you will be kind enough to tell me whether you think there is anything in the idea and whether you think your laboratory can be of assistance in discussions.

In South Africa we have recently noted an epidemic increase of oesophagus cancer among the Bantu and Coloured races, but not among the Indians and Whites. This has occurred subsequently to World War II and I wondered whether it might be possible if this increase could be been related to the use of Kerosene tins for home brewed beer. During the war years these tins were lead plated instead and it is possible, therefore, that those exposed to this beer received a dose of oral lead. Is it possible that any workers in your Institution be able to consider the association between oesophagus cancer and lead and would it be profitable for me to visit your Institution?

Yours sincerely,



DR. A. G. Oettle.

Head : Cancer Research Unit of the
National Cancer Association of S.A.

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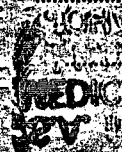
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KETTERING LABORATORIES,

DEPARTMENT OF PREVENTIVE
MEDICINE AND INDUSTRIAL
HEALTH COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA