

September 21, 1961

Dr. Harriet L. Hardy
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Massachusetts

Dear Harriet:

There is very little comprehensive information in the literature with respect to the concentration of lead in food and water with the exception of that which we have provided in relation to the United States. These data apply with reasonable or approximate accuracy to Canada, because of the fairly general similarity of their way of life and ours. There may, however, be some significant differences; of this I cannot be sure one way or the other. On the other hand the facts with respect to the U.S.A. are certainly not applicable quantitatively to other countries, such, for example, as Great Britain and France. Such information as we have, which is fragmentary leads me to suspect that in both of these countries the average intake of lead in food and beverages is higher than ours.

You speak of our early observations as though they had related to a significantly different era than the present. Actually the only feature of the results obtained prior to 1937 - 1938 that disqualifies them as a basis for quantitative comparison with current results is that the methods of analysis changed in 1937 - 38. Since that time we have broadened the base of our information by means of balance experiments in the laboratory and field surveys in various parts of the country. It is highly important to recognize that there has been very little evidence of change in the overall intake of lead on the part of ordinary people in the general population of the United States since the late 1930's. The slight trend toward a decrease may be significant, but I doubt that it is. Our data, while not entirely comprehensive, are certainly illustrative of the facts in the matter in the U.S.A., and they are the best that are available in any country.

In addition to our data, those of Schroeder and his associates are soon to be available, I think. They do not contribute much nor do they alter the pattern. They are of interest chiefly because they include a very sizable mass of data on human tissues which, hitherto have been somewhat inaccessible, namely those of Tipton and her colleagues in work sponsored by A.E.C.

Because of your interest in this problem I am sending you a carbon copy of the text of my first lecture in London (of the Harben series) in which much of the information has been assembled. I'll send you a copy of the published lectures when they are available, but in view of the possibility that the delay in their appearance may be appreciable, I send this now. I

721/1007

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- 2 -

September 21, 1961

would be glad if you would return it when it has served your purpose. If you don't trust me to send you a copy of the combined published lectures without a reminder, you may hold this manuscript as a sort of inanimate hostage, for I need it only in relation to inquiries like yours which appear to justify some prompt documentation.

I may be a bit behind on the literature of this subject, for I haven't had time to review the recent additions to it (the abstracts of which are on my desk). I feel reasonably confident, however, that nothing of earth shattering importance has been added lately. You may or may not be aware of the publications of Monier-Williams in Great Britain, on this subject. I believe it is fair to say, however, that there are few if any data which define the quantities of lead from all sources which are taken in regularly by the average adult of any other country than the U.S.A., except for Japan, where Horiuchi and his associates in the Department of Preventive Medicine and Public Health of Osaka University have patterned some of his work on ours.

I hope these comments and the article will be helpful. If you have any questions in mind, after reading the article, let me know.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

RAK:ss

Enclosure - Copy of Harben Lecture No.1