

Lead Industries Association

420 LEXINGTON AVENUE
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February 21, 1944

Dr. Robert A. Kehoe
University of Cincinnati
College of Medicine
Cincinnati, Ohio

Dear Dr. Kehoe:

I appreciate more than I can express to you the time and trouble you took in your letter of February 7 to answer mine of January 19 on the Byers and Lord article on lead poisoning. Your helpful comment confirms my view that the base upon which the Byers and Lord findings were made needs further clarification, but maybe I was too harsh in my comment.

Indeed, with that thought in mind I visited Boston this week and had luncheon with Dr. Aub who very kindly brought along Dr. Bronson Crothers of the Children's Hospital and Dr. Randolph Byers, surviving author of the Byers and Lord study.

I frankly pointed out my skepticism of many of the cases described in the paper and gave my reasons, mainly that the diagnoses seemed to be based entirely on X-ray findings. Dr. Aub appears to feel that the X-ray besides occasionally showing up calcium in growing children, particularly in rickety children, may also show titanium, a new and common constituent of paint. We all agreed that it seemed desirable to have more work done on that particular aspect of the problem.

I discovered that urine analyses when made by the Children's Hospital did not jibe with those made by the Laboratory of the Division of Industrial Hygiene for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, under Mr. Manfred Bowditch's direction, on the same samples submitted. Incidentally, Mr. Bowditch came along to the luncheon as I wanted him to tell Dr. Crothers and Byers of the work we had jointly undertaken several years ago in the State of Massachusetts to make certain that no toy or crib manufacturer manufactured any product on which lead paint had been applied. Dr. Byers frankly admitted that he had made some crib paint analyses and found them lead-free!



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I reported the result of a recent investigation we had concluded in California on another alleged case of infant poisoning from chewing paint where the hospital authorities had advised us that they were in error - that the crib paint did not contain lead.

In this connection you may be interested in the attached photostat reproductions of two items that appeared in SAFETY EDUCATION. The first one was so alarming that we instituted an investigation with the result shown in the retraction appearing a year later, namely that lead toys had nothing to do with the attack made on our metal. In fact it is the results of many experiences we have had in this connection that have frankly made me suspicious of some of the professional comment I have seen on the subject.

The entire luncheon was so interesting and mutually helpful that I am delighted I had the opportunity to discuss the subject frankly and fully with these gentlemen.

Dr. Crothers pointed out to me the fact that the Children's Hospital is crowded constantly with so many harrowing cases of infant neglect that they sometimes strike out blindly perhaps in an effort to improve conditions and that, therefore, the emotional factor may possibly color their work and partly account for the findings in the Byers and Lord article. Of course, they deplored the notoriety that had been given their findings currently in the popular magazines.

Dr. Aub introduced the thought that it seemed to him children with the condition known as "pica" were abnormal to start with and it wouldn't therefore be surprising to find the abnormality reflected some years later.

I feel that as a result of our conference the Children's Hospital will, so far as it is able, look more carefully into those cases which may be brought to its attention and diagnosed as lead poisoning. I feel also that it is necessary to have more work done on the efficacy of the X-ray as a diagnostic tool.

Feeling that I did not have permission to quote you or make any comment on your behalf on this interesting subject I did not bring your thoughts into the discussion at all.

Dr. Kehoe:

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I know that you will understand that my sole thought in endeavoring to pursue this subject to a sound scientific conclusion is merely to find out where children are constantly being leaded in the United States, where the lead originates and to do all I can to stop it.

I may be in Cincinnati next month and if so will look forward to seeing you again when I hope we can follow this interesting subject a bit further.

With kindest regards,

Sincerely yours,

E. H. Houser
Secretary.

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