

May 11, 1933

Dr. Frank R. Morton
Director of Medical Dept.
Standard Oil Company
910 South Michigan Avenue
Chicago, Illinois

Re: [REDACTED]

Dear Dr. Morton:

I have gone over the report of the examination of one of your employees, [REDACTED]

From the report I take it that the diagnosis of encephalitis is probably correct. However, this is not a help since the question at once arises as to what was the cause of his encephalitis. You are undoubtedly aware that most of the cases of tetraethyl lead poisoning have had cerebral symptoms. It is also generally accepted, whether correctly or not, that the sequelae of lead encephalopathy may resemble a sequelae of infectious encephalitis. In fact, I have known two cases following significant lead exposure in which the Parkinson's syndrome was the most striking part of the clinical picture. Thus it is impossible to say from the record that this was not a case of lead poisoning.

The question of diagnosis now is obviously difficult. It has been shown experimentally that the lead findings disappear even in cases of serious exposure after a period of a year to eighteen months. Thus negative lead findings on this man at the present including such things as blood changes, lead line and lead in the excreta have no significance whatever either positively or negatively. You are, therefore, in the situation of having to make a diagnosis from the history only. The question remains, therefore, did this man have a significant exposure to lead. If he did have such significant exposure, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to combat a claim for compensation or a suit. In fact, such a thing could not be done in good conscience and with a reasonable consideration for justice unless there are things in the clinical picture which justify the diagnosis of infectious encephalitis rather than lead injury. From what you tell me in your letter, I would assume that this man has had a significant exposure. That may or may not be the case, but in the second paragraph of the examination it is stated that he mixed Ethyl Fluid with gasoline by draining it from a barrel into a vessel, and

pouring it into a tank of gasoline. If this was done without due precautions, he most undoubtedly had significant exposure to tetraethyl lead and may have developed an acute lead encephalopathy. Your only recourse in obtaining the facts in this case is to carefully establish the nature of his exposure to tetraethyl lead. If it can be proven that his exposure to lead was insignificant, his present condition can be explained on another basis. However, as you are aware, it is just the type of exposure which is described in this history which I have attempted to completely eradicate from the Ethyl Gasoline mixing operations. I have not done it for theoretical reasons but rather because I know it is dangerous. Therefore, it is my opinion that unless you can demonstrate that this man did not have the exposure described in the history, it will be impossible to make an adequate defence against his claim.

Very truly yours,

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