

May 8, 1937

Mr. I. Dent Jenkins  
Harrison Radiator Division  
General Motors Corporation  
Lockport, New York

Dear Mr. Jenkins:

I am somewhat at a loss to reply to your letter of May 5th since it is not quite clear to me what you want done. I attempted to call you by telephone this morning since it seemed that one or two points in the matter might be better clarified in a telephone conversation, than by correspondence. Finding that you were not in Lockport, I must resort to correspondence and I, therefore, raise a series of questions to which I would like to have your prompt reply. It might be wise in this connection if you would call me up on receipt of this letter, although it would be better if you could make a trip to Cincinnati so as to discuss with me in some detail what you have in mind.

Unless I misunderstand what you have in mind, it does not seem to me that the tentative program which you have suggested is likely to result in the acquisition of any information which would be of any use to us, or of any interest in connection with our general experimental program. I do not wish to be arbitrary in the matter, but the position of this laboratory is such that we can not engage in rendering clinical services which are not associated with the acquisition of information of scientific usefulness. For us to have any other program of procedure would simply mean that we are engaging in the practice of industrial medicine for compensation purposes, and whether or not I might wish to do this, I can not properly do so. It is also my considered judgment that whatever we do that does not give us the information we want, will fail to give you the information which you should have. With this preliminary statement of my position in principle, there are several questions I would like to ask before discussing certain additional practical difficulties.

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Am I to understand that you wish to have a limited number of physical examinations made without obtaining samples of blood and, or, excreta for chemical analysis?

Am I further to understand that you want merely physical examinations made without any laboratory procedures?

Is there any reason why the presence of more than one medical man with a technical assistant would produce difficulties among your plant personnel? If not, why is it better to have a medical man there for a period of one or two weeks rather than to have two or three men there for a period of a few days?

I raise these questions for the following reasons:

1. Unless we find it possible to make accurate studies of the exposure conditions on a quantitative basis which we can compare with our other available data, we will not be able to learn anything which will be of use to us, nor will we be able to give you the advice you require. Under these circumstances, I should feel it necessary to decline your proposal in toto.

2. It would not be feasible to do clinical examinations adequately without carrying out such laboratory procedures as red and white counts, hemoglobin determinations and stippling. This work could best be done in the plant by a technician at the time of the physical examinations. In any case, therefore, it would be wise for the doctor to have the help of one of our own competently trained technical assistants.

3. My third question is inspired by my wish to do such work as we are to do in your plant in the shortest possible period. I, and all of my associates, are head-over-heels in work, so much so, in fact, that any additional work at this time is a distinct inconvenience and has to be done at some conflict with the ordered program of our experimental work. At the moment I doubt if any one of the men could spend two weeks on this type of work without considerable inconvenience, and I would consent to this arrangement only if it were strictly necessary and if at the same time the results in terms of addition to our own

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data were sufficient to justify it.

I believe you will be able to see from my comments the manner of my thinking on this general procedure. I would suggest that if you have in mind the examination of only a few men, either because of the greater expense of the more extensive investigation, or by reason of the possibility of upsetting your employment situation, that you pick out men whom you want examined, handling the situation with them in any way you feel is necessary, and that you present this to me as to what is to be done, leaving to me the determination of how best it can be done. I would like to make it quite clear to you that unless we are in position to do a job of work which we ourselves can approve as to its usefulness and the manner of its details, we shall not be able to interest ourselves in the work at all. I regret to have to put the matter thus bluntly, but I can not permit this laboratory, which is a University and investigative laboratory, to be placed in the position of rendering medical service for compensation, regardless of the need of the work or its general usefulness from the medical point of view.

With kindest personal regards,

Cordially yours,

RAK:is

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.