

July 30, 1959

Mr. J. S. Lerner
Riker Laboratories, Inc.
Medical Department
Northridge
California

Dear Mr. Lerner:

Please accept my apology for my long delay in replying to your note of May 8. I've been even more than usually busy in and out of my office, and my correspondence has had to take its chances. Everything that could be pushed back on my desk has been so treated, and the result, now that I'm trying to clear up the residuum before going on a holiday, has been dismaying.

In this situation, I've been unable to look through our thousands of analytical records, and I cannot remember the unusual cases for there are so many of them, and too many years are involved. All I can say in response to your question is that we have seen quite a number of results of the order of magnitude of 0.7 mg. per 100 grams of whole blood. A number of the very high findings have been in the blood of children, for here some of the largest dosages of lead are taken within relatively short periods. We have had high results in association with occupational exposure to lead also, and it is not too remarkable to find concentrations of the order of 0.40, 0.50 and 0.60 mg. per 100 grams. I believe the highest value encountered in the blood of a child in this year's crop of more than 20 cases has been 0.42 mg. per 100 grams.

I have no idea what the record is, but I remember our repeated findings in a man in his sixties, who was entirely symptom-free (of symptoms of lead poisoning), but was under our observation as an ambulatory patient for six or eight months. His blood lead initially was somewhat above 0.60 mg. per 100 grams; it subsided slowly, without therapy (this was before EDTA was available), reaching the upper normal range at about the end of our observations. The latter came to an end, when our patient, who had been co-operative for a long time, became restive and decided he had been a "guinea pig" long enough. We released him with our blessing, with gratitude for his willingness to let us study him as an unusual case.

Mr. J. S. Lerner

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I would not bear in mind, with any particular vividness, an unusually high level in the blood, but rather would consider that it needed to be confirmed by one or more additional analyses. What I would remember, as a matter of the greatest significance, if I were to encounter it, and could confirm it, would be a person, child or adult, who, at the time of onset of characteristic lead intoxication was found to have a concentration less than 0.08 mg. per 100 grams in the blood (as determined by an analytical method of appropriate sensitivity and accuracy). This, I have never seen, nor do I expect to do so, and hence my notice of it would be immediate and skeptical.

Cordially yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

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