

RUTHERFORD T. JOHNSTONE, M.D.

BROCKMAN BUILDING
520 WEST SEVENTH STREET

Los Angeles 14, Calif.

MADISON 3-2965

OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES

INDUSTRIAL TOXICOLOGY

November 18, 1964

Harriet L. Hardy, M.D.
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Occupational Medical Service
Cambridge 39, Mass.

Dear Harriet,

I have no idea who wrote that I "believe that there is no place for the use of calcium sodium EDTA in the treatment of lead poisoning." That quoted statement is untrue. You will find my opinion expressed on pages 297-99 of the Johnstone-Miller textbook or on page IX-4 of the Kettering Laboratory Lead Symposium, February, 1963. In such and other sources you will note that I feel that the case of mild lead poisoning need not be treated with EDTA.

No one in his or her right mind would or should disclaim the judicious use of EDTA any more than the selective use of digitalis. Nor does every case of anemia require injections of iron or a blood transfusion. I do not know who sees more cases of mild lead intoxication than I do. Los Angeles County has many small plants utilizing lead for various purposes. From such are referred to me cases so mild in nature that years ago, before management and labor were on their toes, they would go unrecognized for a long period of time. But not so today. Nor do I feel that these early mild cases need fear dire effects years later which you intimate may occur in your statement "a young man with acute lead poisoning who has his whole work life ahead of him."

Your letter confuses me on another item. You write as follows - "This is becoming a somewhat important point, if true, in this area where there is a great lot of building of highways and, as a result, structural steel workers are exposed in many ways to toxic lead compounds." Come again, Harriet. That statement finds me way out in left field.

If I am unclear, let me know. I do not maintain that my position is beyond challenge but from nearly thirty years experience both before and after the arrival of EDTA on the scene, I feel reasonable certainty that my therapeutic regime has been efficient and sufficient.

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It is always nice to hear from you. I, too, miss Manfred and Paul Richards. When Manfred left the circle my incoming mail dropped 20 percent. Last Friday I enjoyed a short visit with Anne Baetzer.

Sincerely,

R. T. Johnstone, M.D.

RTJ/rcm

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