

August 28, 1970

John S. Chapman, M.D.
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Dallas, Texas 75219

Dear Doctor Chapman:

I have examined Forrest E. Rieke's paper which you sent with your letter of August 19. I know Rieke fairly well through direct acquaintance (not in depth, for clinical purposes), and by reputation among knowledgeable colleagues. I am not impressed by his specific skill and critical judgment in dealing with lead poisoning.

This paper does not contribute anything new to the subject. It would be useful in a local journal in which one were to discuss the subject with his not very well informed colleagues. It is not of the calibre which should be expected in the J.A.M.A. or in the Archives, both of which are now concerned with additions to our knowledge of the behavior of lead.

Not all of the advice given in the paper is valid, and while the subject is treated satisfactorily in the main, it is dealt with less than precisely in some respects. For example, the use of chelation in diagnosis is not described in sufficient detail, whereas if this test has any meaning at all, the method must be precise, and the differential results must be defined quantitatively. Chelation therapy, as well as the provocative test (so called), has been dealt with very loosely by many of the people who have adopted it as the answer to prayer in the matter of efficacy. (This is far from valid.) Rieke does nothing to put either the therapy or the diagnostic test, on a sound basis.

The paper could be revised so as to be acceptable (but not by Rieke, who is somewhat of a "show off"), but no amount of simple revision could make it an important contribution to this subject. I have no doubt that Rieke can make a good stab at the differential diagnosis of lead poisoning, but what he says in this paper is not a good guide for physicians whose experience is slight, and is worthless to those who are really well informed by training and experience.

I trust that my remarks will be helpful to you in dealing with this paper. I should not, of course, wish to be identified with the comments which I have made, for purely personal reasons, despite the fact that I would be prepared to give the author, himself, all of my criticisms in some detail. I do not say this by way of self-protection, for I know that this is not necessary, but rather to make clear to you that criticisms such as I have made would be addressed directly to a professional colleague and not "behind his back," except in the fulfillment of a professional obligation, as in this instance.

Sincerely yours,

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