

December 27, 1948

Dr. Rutherford T. Johnstone,
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and Industrial Medicine and Public Health,
American Medical Association,
727 West Seventh Street,
Los Angeles 14, California.

*Saw in Chicago - found
these proposals had been abandoned
but another that concerns me
is under consideration*

Dear Red:

I have been pondering over your letter of December 3 before replying, since I am in doubt as to the attractiveness and utility of either or both of the subjects given in your letter. I am not prepared to say that I would not be willing to cover one or the other of them, but either job would represent a very considerable amount of work, and I wonder if certain other subjects might not be more useful to our audience. In any case, I shall mention certain questions which exist in my mind and await your reaction about them before making a decision. Incidentally, I am off to Florida today for some days of rest, and perhaps I shall be able to look a job in the face with a little more willingness when I return. On the other hand, I should not want you to think that my questions are inspired by my reluctance to do some work. I do want anything I do to count for as much as possible. With respect to the use of BAL, while this problem is a very interesting one, and while it has a very significant meaning in relation to acute heavy metal poisoning of certain specific varieties (especially mercury and arsenic), I am very dubious of its having any special importance in connection with industrial poisoning. Our experience enables me to say that it is of no value in dealing with episodes of lead poisoning. Various people are trying to lift themselves by their boot straps and trying to bring it to mean something in prophylaxis, but, in my opinion, this is merely wishful thinking. Its usefulness in other forms of industrial metal poisoning is open to very great doubt, both in principle and in practice. If you feel that this is important enough, in the negative sense, I shall be glad to discuss it.

With reference to the present status of research in industrial medicine, it will be extremely difficult to provide an interesting and useful discussion. What can be said is that we need much more research. I know of much that is going on, but my feeling is that we should talk on this subject to industrial management, rather than to the doctors. I admit that the doctors do not understand the need, fully, but I wonder if we want to be evangelical in a program of this sort. At least let me know what you have in mind, and I shall consider whether this is a better subject for me than No. 1, and/or whether we may be likely to induce somebody to discuss it. If you have any other subjects in mind, that might be of interest to me, let me know about them, for I should be glad to help out.

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If you do not have time to reply to this before the Chicago meeting, I shall see you and discuss this with you there.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

RAK ef

Dictated on December 23, but on read.

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