

METROPOLITAN LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY

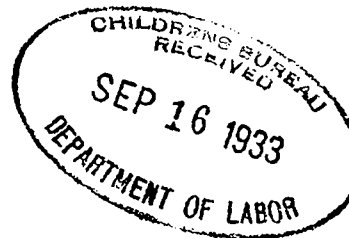
NEW YORK CITY

LOUIS I. DUBLIN
Third Vice-President
and Statistician

September 14, 1933

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Dr. Ella Oppenheimer
Childrens Bureau
Washington, D. C.



Dear Dr. Oppenheimer

The inquiry to which you refer was made in 1930 by means of the enclosed letter which we sent to a list of 75 pediatricists in practically all sections of the country.

We received 33 replies. The most important of these was from Dr. Charles F. McKhann of the Department of Pediatrics, Harvard Medical School and the Childrens Hospital, Boston. He is the physician referred to in the October 1930 Statistical Bulletin and who stated that he had seen 50 cases of lead poisoning in children during six years in the Childrens Hospital. He further stated that these cases were "proven beyond a doubt," and that the "lead is obtained from chewing paint from the crib, woodwork about the house and toys." Dr. McKhann had an article on "Lead Poisoning in Children" in the American Journal of Diseases of Children, September, 1926; also a second article on this subject - where published I do not recall.

Dr. Arthur F. Abt of Chicago, author of Abt's Pediatrics, wrote us that "lead poisoning in children is not uncommon." Dr. C. G. Grulee, Chicago, author of textbooks on childrens diseases, in referring to paragraphs a, b, c and d in our form letter said, "I think the points mentioned by the pediatricists are well taken, in fact, I agree absolutely in every way with them." Dr. Harold K. Faber, Professor of Pediatrics at Stanford University School of Medicine, wrote that he was "surprised that the subject had not come to the attention of your Company long ago," and that "every pediatrician of experience keeps it in mind when he is dealing with cases of convulsions without fever, severe secondary anemias with constipation and abdominal pain, and the like." Dr. Faber mentions four recent references in American pediatric literature, together with one South American reference and one Japanese. Dr. A. G. Basler, Professor of Pediatrics at the Chicago Medical School, writes that the condition is well known and that he has "for 25 years warned parents as to cribs, toys, etc., painted with lead paint." Many other doctors wrote that they had seen cases of lead poisoning in children and mentioned cribs, toys, woodwork, furniture, lead nipple shields and breast ointments with a lead base as the sources.

On the other hand, a few of the doctors wrote that they had never seen, or rarely seen, a case of lead poisoning in children. Even among these, several either knew of such cases, recognized lead poisoning in infants as a definite entity, or made it a point to warn mothers of the danger.

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In connection with this whole matter, please be advised that our Bulletin article received a great deal of publicity against which there was strong remonstrance by the Lead Industries Association. You will readily understand that we wish to avoid any controversy with the lead people. Please, therefore, do not mention the Metropolitan^x in connection with whatever releases you may make. We have the entire case in our files and if you wish to see all the correspondence, or will send a representative to this Bureau, it will be placed at your service. In that event, kindly see our Supervisor, Mr. Van Buren.

Very truly yours



Third Vice President
and Statistician

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Enc.

^x either directly
or by inference used

METROPOLITAN LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY

FREDERICK H. ECKER, PRESIDENT

NEW YORK CITY

LOUIS I. DUBLIN
Statistician

September 11, 1930

*Letter sent
to 75
pediatrists*

Dear Doctor:

Within two months several deaths of young children insured in the Industrial Department of this Company have been certified as due to lead poisoning. Except for these, and one additional case reported several years ago, all deaths reported from this cause among our more than nineteen million Industrial policyholders have been those of adults, and have been identified as due to chronic occupational poisoning. In a death certified to us several years ago, the physician told us that the child had formed the habit of eating paint from its crib and had actually died from a chronic lead intoxication.

In the most recent of these cases the certifying physician happened to be a pediatricist of high standing. In his reply to our letter asking particulars about the case history, he stated:

- a. That the history was positive and definite,
- b. That he was surprised that we had found the diagnosis so rare in children, and that in his judgment, it would be reported more often but for the fact that the condition is often unrecognized by physicians,
- c. That it is obvious that more care should be taken by parents to safeguard children against contracting lead poisoning,
- d. That if the Metropolitan could do anything toward disseminating information about lead poisoning in young children, it would perform a "valuable service."

We have decided to follow up this very interesting information on lead poisoning and to ascertain, if possible, whether the opinion of the pediatricist with whom we have corresponded is confirmed by that of pediatricists in general. If so, we shall be glad to call attention to lead poisoning among young children in the literature of our Welfare Division.

It will be greatly appreciated if you will give us the benefit of your judgment and experience in this matter.

Very truly yours,

Statistician

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