

MEMORANDUM

I was advised by Mr. J. S. Cole (about July 3, 1945) that a Mr. [REDACTED] was asking for compensation for injury allegedly sustained while an employee of the City Water Works of Thermopolis, Wyoming. Mr. Cole stated that District Judge Metz had asked to talk to me about the case since the compensation claim would be decided in his court.

I talked to Judge Metz at his home in Basin, Wyoming, on or about July 6, 1945. He stated that Mr. [REDACTED] had been an employee of the City of Thermopolis for a few years, working in the power house of the Water Works: that leaded gasoline was used as fuel for a motor and that Mr. [REDACTED] had used the gasoline as a cleaning agent; that he (Mr. [REDACTED]) had been ill for many months and that the illness apparently was acute originally and that there was apparently confusion in diagnosis. Mr. [REDACTED] had stated that he had consulted an astonishing number of doctors during the course of the illness which had become chronic and which had (presumably) produced bilateral blindness.

Judge Metz presented a letter from Dr. D. H. O'Rourke of Denver, Colorado wherein Dr. O'Rourke quoted an opinion stated by Dr. R. A. Kehoe in answer to a request by Dr. O'Rourke for an opinion as to the production of optic nerve lesions by lead. The judge also stated that he had been informed that Mr. [REDACTED] had visited the Mayo Clinic and that a diagnosis of optic neuritis had been made at this clinic, and the cause stated as being due to absorption of lead from leaded gasoline.

Judge Metz then asked for an opinion on the possibility of the complaintant having absorbed lead from leaded gasoline and on the possibility of an optic neuritis resulting from the stated exposure to leaded gasoline.

I stated the opinion that the possibility of the absorption of significant quantities of lead from the stated exposure was so remote as to be practically non-existent; that the absorption of gasoline might possibly be a factor in the production of such a lesion but this possibility was also extremely remote; that inorganic lead absorbed from an unknown source might conceivably produce such a lesion and that there were many other intrinsic and extrinsic causes of optic nerve lesions.

Judge Metz stated that he might ask for further professional advice from the Kettering Laboratory group.


Lester W. Sanders, M.D.