

January 16, 1948

Dr. Price H. Duff,  
1110 Buchanan Street,  
Nashville, Tenn.

Dear Dr. Duff:

Some time ago I received word to the effect that Mr. [REDACTED], an employee of Standard Oil Company, had developed an illness which had been diagnosed as acute plumbism. I inquired of Dr. Paul G. Morrissey, Jr. about this man and was referred to Dr. Robert N. Buchanan, a dermatologist, who has told me that Mr. Patterson was referred to him by yourself. I and my associates have been investigating cases of illness of all types which arise in any relationship to exposure to tetraethyl lead or to gasoline containing tetraethyl lead, and it was this which aroused my interest in this case.

The diagnosis of acute plumbism in this man, who apparently had dermatitis when seen by Dr. Buchanan raises a very significant question, since exposure to the gasoline alone under ordinary conditions is incapable of producing lead poisoning. In this instance some analytical figures were quoted which would seem to have provided a basis for concluding that there had been occupational lead absorption. The figures cited may or may not have been given correctly, but they were impossibly high. For all of these reasons I would appreciate it very much if you were to give me the information available to you on this case, so as to enable me to arrive at an understanding of the situation. Moreover, the question of the validity of the analytical findings obtained previously could readily be checked by us, and if you so desire, I should be glad to provide you with the necessary containers and instructions for the collection of samples whereby a definite conclusion could be arrived at. Perhaps I need not point out to you that analyses of this type are difficult to perform, and that the results obtained in the hands of any but the most experienced persons, are likely to be erroneous. If the figures originally quoted to me were given correctly, I am sure that either the analyses were improperly conducted or that the sample of urine was contaminated in the process of its collection.

In any case I shall appreciate having any information you may find it possible to give me.

Cordially yours,

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Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

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