

July 26, 1962

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Dear Charley:

Please accept my apology for the tardiness of my reply to your letter of June 29. I've been hard pressed and have been compelled to allow my correspondence to lapse.

We have no (or very few) satisfactory data on the matter of your inquiry. In general, I would say that the presence of measurable quantities of mercury in human tissues may be accepted as evidence of recent exposure of some type. Our evidence relates primarily to the urine, so far as men are concerned (except in relation to fatal poisoning), and I can say that there is no mercury in the urine of children who have sustained no recent exposure to mercury therapeutically or fortuitously. The reason for this, no doubt, lies in the fact that mercury, except in minute traces, is lost from the body very rapidly after the exposure ends. Only the minutest quantities remain in such organs as liver and kidney.

So far as my experience goes (and it is not adequate), the figures which you cite are clearly indicative of recent exposure (probably through ingestion) to mercury. There are many ways, in these days, in which such exposure could have occurred. On the other hand, mercury is not widely distributed under ordinary environmental conditions.

I am sorry I can not be more helpful, but we have never had the means of establishing the facts which apply in this situation.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
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SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

June 20, 1962

Dr. Robert Kehoe
Medical Director
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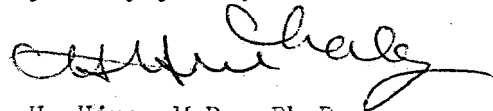
Dear Bob:

Would you be good enough to furnish me with data relative to the ranges of normal tissue levels of mercury in persons with no known exposure to industrial mercury compounds or mercurial therapeutic agents.

I recently saw the results of some neutron activation analyses which indicated a level of approximately 1 to 3 ppm in the liver and intestinal wall of a deceased. No analyses were made of the urine and there was no known exposure in this 26 year old school teacher. Would this level, in your opinion, be elevated and indicative of increased mercury absorption?

Thank you for any help you may give me in this matter.

Very truly yours,



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