

LEAD INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION

420 Lexington Avenue

New York 17, N. Y.

MANFRED BOWDITCH
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH AND SAFETY

August 29, 1951

Robert H. Kotte, M. D.
1710 Madison Road
Cincinnati 6, Ohio

Dear Dr. Kotte:

I now have a bit more time to respond to your letter of August 22nd, with which a tabulation of the facts of the five fatal cases at the Children's and Cincinnati General Hospitals was enclosed.

As you say, you have at present no home check up, and this is reflected in the meager data in the "source" column of an otherwise excellent summary. The clinician's primary concern with diagnosis and treatment is of course only natural, but until major emphasis is placed on etiology, we are badly hamstrung in formulating the preventive program which must be the basic attack on this problem.

"Paper" in Case 4 is quite meaningless and none of the others are really pinned down as regards an actually proven cause. I do not question that all of these are quite genuine cases of lead poisoning and experience leads me to believe that ingested lead paint is the causative agent in many of them, but I cannot be satisfied that an adequate investigation is being carried out until it includes some such field studies as are reported in the letters from Dr. Maloof to Dr. Byers of which copies were enclosed with my letter of August 15th.

I hope you will not feel that I am trying to deliver a lecture. I merely feel that I must emphasize and re-emphasize a point in which I am sure that Dr. Kehoe will bear me out, namely that there are too many cases of plumbism on record in which the source of the poison, seemingly perfectly obvious, has been shown by investigation to be a factor initially quite unsuspected.

Robert H. Kotte, M. D.

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August 29, 1951

A particularly distressing case right on our door
step is described in my enclosures.

Sincerely yours,



MB/ad
encl.

cc: Dr. Kehoe
Dr. Wheatley

KE 0014662

The Baby Just Kept Screaming . . .

STORY ON PAGE 3

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THE DAILY COMPASS

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VOL. III, NO. 87 12 PAGES FRIDAY, AUGUST 24, 1951

CITY FINAL

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THE DAILY COMPASS, FRIDAY, AUGUST 24, 1951

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The Doctors Disagreed, The Baby Kept Screaming . . .

When two-year-old Celeste Felder began crying and refusing meals six weeks ago in her home at 473 Macon St., her Negro parents, Mr. and Mrs. William Felder, called the doctor. He said the child had intestinal grippe, gave her penicillin, told the parents not to worry.

Celeste got worse. Her crying turned to screams. She couldn't hold any food. The doctor said

she'd soon get better. But she didn't.

Monday, Felder called in another doctor. He said Celeste had a virus infection—nothing to worry about. Celeste took her medicine and her screams became louder.

Tuesday, she went out of her head before losing consciousness. Her father took her to Kings County Hospital, where a third physician examined her. "Upper respiratory infection," he said.

Felder pleaded she was too sick for that, but the doctor gave the baby more medicine and sent her home.

All day Wednesday, Celeste was shaken by convulsions. That night she became unconscious again. Felder called police. They summoned an ambulance that took the child to Bushwick Hospital. A woman doctor said it was a bad case of tonsillitis. Take her home, let her rest, give her medicine, Felder was ad-

vised. "You don't understand," the father cried, near tears. "My baby's dying."

"Take her home. It would be foolish to waste money." At home, more shrieks. This time, to Brooklyn Eye and Ear Hospital. Here, at last, a woman doctor said the inflamed tonsils were not enough cause the convulsions. "It at be lead poisoning." The doctor suggested the child

be transferred to Cumberland Hospital, better equipped for the case. Cumberland doctors agreed with the lead poisoning diagnosis. It turned out Celeste had a habit of eating anything that came to hand—dirt, plaster, paint, putty, anything she could stuff in her mouth. Treatments began. But it was too late. Yesterday, at 4:15 a.m., Celeste died.

4 DIAGNOSES WRONG AND GIRL, 2, IS DEAD

Autopsy Proves Brooklyn Child to Have Been a Victim of Lead Poisoning

A 2-year-old Brooklyn girl died of lead poisoning yesterday after her illness had been diagnosed by doctors in three hospitals in the last three weeks as tonsillitis, virus infection, blood poisoning and an inflamed throat. The real cause was not determined until an autopsy was performed.

It was not known how she got lead poisoning but, because little children are known to chew things indiscriminately, it was suggested she might have swallowed lead paint flakes. Medical authorities say such poisoning is difficult to diagnose unless there is a prior suspicion of it.

The little girl was Celeste Felder of 473 Macon Street, in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section. Her father, William, an IND subway clerk with three other children, said private doctors were uncertain of the malady when it occurred but suggested it might have been caused by a virus. Her condition worsened and Mr. Felder took her on Tuesday night to Kings County Hospital, where he was told she had an inflamed throat. She received some medicine.

Despite his request that she be kept overnight, he was told there was nothing seriously wrong. She took another turn for the worse on Wednesday. A call to the police brought an ambulance from Bushwick Hospital, where the diagnosis was tonsillitis. Mr. Felder was told to take the child to the Brooklyn Eye and Ear Hospital yesterday morning. But she became so ill when she reached home that Mr. Felder took her to the eye and ear hospital immediately.

Doctors there said they believed she was seriously ill of blood poisoning and advised moving her to Cumberland Hospital, where the facilities were said to be better for treatment of poisoning. There, at the third hospital of the night, she died.

N.Y. Times, Aug. 24, 1951

KE 0014663

2 MDs, 2 Hospitals Err, Child Dies

Victim of Lead Poisoning After 4 Wrong Diagnoses

The 2½-year-old daughter of a Brooklyn railroad clerk died of acute lead poisoning yesterday after, police said, two private doctors and two hospitals had incorrectly diagnosed the case and assured the parents she was "not seriously ill."

An autopsy performed by Assistant Medical Examiner Rosenthal showed that the little Negro girl, Celeste Felder of 473 Macon St., had swallowed some paint—just as her father, William, 34, had feared all the time. Rosenthal pointed out that the report was not final and that he would await results of a toxicological examination.

Felder told police Celeste was in the habit of eating "anything she could get her hands on," but that when she began crying and refusing to eat about six weeks ago, they thought she was just jealous of her new brother, born June 5.

They took her to a doctor, who

said she had intestinal grippe and gave her a shot of penicillin. Last Monday they took her to another doctor, who said it was a virus infection — "nothing to worry about."

On Tuesday, the child's condition worsened. Her father rushed her to Kings County Hospital, where "an upper respiratory infection" was diagnosed. Despite the father's pleas, he was told to take Celeste home.

When she developed convulsions on Wednesday, Felder took his daughter to Bushwick Hospital. This time it was "a bad case of tonsillitis." He was told

to take her home, let her rest and to give her medicine.

As the screams and unconsciousness resumed, the father took Celeste to Brooklyn Eye and Ear Hospital. This time a woman doctor agreed with him that inflamed tonsils were not enough to cause her condition and said it might be lead poisoning.

The doctor suggested Celeste be taken to Cumberland Hospital, where there were better facilities for proper treatment. But it was too late. The child died in Cumberland at 4:15 a. m.

Police of the Classon Ave. station said their investigation was ended.

N.Y. Daily Mirror, Aug. 24, 1951

His Little Girl Screamed in Pain for 6 Weeks

But 4 MDs Said, 'Don't Worry'; Then She Died

A 2½-year-old girl died in convulsion today, apparently of lead poisoning, after two private doctors and two hospitals had diagnosed her ailment as "not serious."

The two hospitals turned little Celeste Felder away, saying her swollen tonsils could be treated at home. But doctors at Cumberland Hospital, Bklyn., where she died, said the Negro girl's habit of eating anything that came to hand—dirt, plaster, paint, putty, anything she could stuff in her mouth—may have caused her death.

When Celeste began crying and refusing meals about six weeks ago, her parents, Mr. and Mrs. William Felder, of 473 Macon St., Bklyn., thought she was merely jealous of her new brother, born June 5. The child's weeping kept

up, however, and a private physician was consulted.

Told Not to Worry.

He said Celeste had intestinal grippe, gave her penicillin, and told her parents not to worry.

Celeste got worse. Her crying turned to screams. She couldn't hold any food. The doctor said she would improve soon, but she didn't.

Monday, Mr. Felder called in another doctor. He said the child had a virus infection. Again, it was nothing to worry about. Celeste took her medicine and her screams grew louder.

Out of Her Head.

Tuesday, she went out of her head before lapsing into unconsciousness. Her father rushed her to Kings County Hospital, where a third physician examined her.

"Upper respiratory infection," he said, Mr. Felder pleaded she was too sick for that, but said the doctor gave the baby more medicine and sent her home.

All day yesterday, convulsions shook Celeste's tiny frame. She became unconscious again last night. In desperation Mr. Felder called police. They sent an ambulance which took the sick youngster to Bushwick Hospital.

Sent Home Again.

A woman doctor there, a hospital spokesman said, looked at Celeste's throat and said she had a bad case of tonsillitis. Take her home, let her rest, give her medicine, she advised.

"You don't understand," Mr. Felder cried, almost in tears, "My baby's dying."

But the doctor insisted it "would

be foolish and a waste of money" to admit Celeste for further observation, according to Mr. Felder. "Take her home," she repeated with professional finality.

Home again, the now-familiar periods of screams and unconsciousness were resumed. Mr. Felder took Celeste to Brooklyn Eye and Ear Hospital where another woman doctor said her inflamed tonsils were not enough to cause the convulsions. "It might be lead poisoning," she said after examination.

She suggested the child be transferred to Cumberland Hospital, where facilities for treating her were greater. Cumberland doctors agreed with the lead poisoning diagnosis and did what could be done for Celeste. But it was too late. She died at 4:15 a.m.

N.Y. World Telegram + Sun, Aug. 23, 1951