

April 23, 1949

Dr. J. Franklin Yeager,
Division of Research Grants and Fellowships,
National Institute of Health,
Bethesda 14, Maryland.

Re: RG-1970

Dear Doctor Yeager:

I regret very much the prolonged delay in my reply to your letter of April 4 in connection with the research project outlined by Doctor Frank Princi. I have been compelled to be out of my office for some ten days, and all of my correspondence has accumulated.

I have no hesitation whatever with respect to the qualifications of Doctor Princi and his group for the prosecution of the work proposed. It will be done systematically, critically and well.

The only question relates to the need for the work proposed. Doctor Princi is quite right, in my opinion, in pointing out that there is no adequate information with respect to the occurrence of basophilic stippling of the erythrocytes in disease processes in general. It is well known that such erythrocytes occur in the blood of normal individuals, within certain limits, and that they occur in increased numbers in certain types of diseases. The extent of their occurrence and the wide variety of disease is not known, and one may properly ask how important it is to know so much about this one type of formed element in the peripheral blood stream. We have been making observations, with specific reference to apparently normal persons, and persons in the lead trades for many years, and we quite agree with Doctor Princi that there is great confusion in the minds of medical men as to the significance of the stippling in relation to lead absorption and lead poisoning. The facts in the matter are much clearer than men's minds, and I am not wholly convinced that the clearest elucidation of the facts will dispel the confusion of thought. The present medical procedure, with respect to observations on stippled erythrocytes in connection with lead absorption, is not based on any very great doubt as to the facts on this specific point, but rather on tradition and prejudice.

Despite the above remarks, I would like very much to see the work done which Doctor Princi proposes. With respect to the lead problem his results will certainly confirm the observations made in this Laboratory, many of which are unpublished, and would, at the same time, extend the investigation well beyond the field with which we have dealt.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.