

April 18, 1960

Dr. M. D. Bennin
Oculist
6, East Monroe Street
Chicago 3, Illinois

Dear Doctor Bennin:

The concern of the group and of the effort referred to in the article in the April 2nd issue of J.A.M.A. relates to the lead in paints and the effects of the ingestion of lead from this and other sources on children. Here the matter of the solvent is of little or no significance.

Our concern in this Laboratory has also been focused largely on the lead content of paints, rather than on the solvents or vehicles - at least my efforts have been directed to the former. From time to time, however, we have had occasion to consider the vehicle in connection with cases and reports of cases of illnesses incurred during the application of paints.

It is difficult to provide you with any very useful information on this subject in a letter, and I am afraid I cannot give you reference in an off-hand manner. The problem, with respect to the available information is not that simple, for the reason that the fashion, so to speak, with respect to vehicles, has changed and continues to change according to the availability of commercial solvents for this purpose. For example, some years ago, the principal solvents in spray paints for a variety of purposes (automobile bodies etc.) was of the banana oil type, while now petroleum solvents, I believe, constitute the bulk of the vehicles of spray paints. The toxicology of certain of the latter solvents, especially that of the higher aromatic compounds has not been worked out extensively. Others such as certain ketones (ethyl-methyl for example) have been investigated.

In general it is fair to say that there has not been much trouble under the usual conditions of use. Comparatively mild symptoms of acute intoxication have occurred not infrequently, but these, in the main, have been of a fleeting and reversible character. I cannot say that there have not been some more serious illnesses, but such have not come to our attention in such a way that I am impressed by their importance. This statement should not be taken too seriously for the fact is that we have not made a point of looking for trouble. Serious situations have a way of coming to our attention, but it is entirely possible that some instances

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of significance have passed us by.

If you have a specific case in relation to a specific solvent, I would be interested and might be of help, but your general question extends into a large segment of industrial toxicology.

Cordially yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

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