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ST. JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL, ALTON, ILL.

December 22, 1942

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.
Kettering Laboratory of Applied Physiology
University of Cincinnati
Cincinnati, Ohio

Dear Dr. Kehoe:

Please find enclosed a letter written to me by the trial attorney for the Western Cartridge Company of Alton, Illinois. This letter will explain to you the essence of the problem with which we are confronted in connection with defending a number of apparently fraudulent claims of lead poisoning which have been filed against this company during the past year. So far we have been successful in defending these claims by showing the courts that there was no clinical evidence of lead intoxication. The plaintiffs claims have in every case been based upon the finding of large quantities of lead in the feces, blood and urine, rather than upon clinical evidence. Furthermore, the only laboratory in the St. Louis district in which lead determinations are made on biological material is one upon which complete reliance cannot be placed. I therefore advised Mr. Baetz that his defense could be greatly strengthened if your laboratory would perform these lead tests. We have many reasons for discrediting the lead claims which have been filed against the Western Cartridge Company, one of the chief ones being that none of these claimants have been employed in a department where lead is present except as an impurity in brass. Furthermore, we are fearful that if any of these claims are won, based only on finding abnormal quantities of lead in the blood and urine, there may be an epidemic of such claims.

At present we have won the right to have these claimants in our hospital for an observation period of 3 days, away from contact with other physicians, before the blood, urine and feces samples are obtained. This was done because in a recent case the most plausible explanation for a large quantity of lead in the stool (10 mg. plus per 100 grams of dried feces) was that it was due to the claimant having taken by mouth a large amount of lead shortly before entry into the hospital. The urine report in this case was .0141 mg. %. The blood determination was not reported. The man had not been employed for over six months and showed no symptoms the least bit suggestive of lead poisoning.

This case, as in the others, has shown a marked discrepancy between the large amounts of lead in the feces (and sometimes in the urine) and the complete absence of clinical evidence of lead intoxication. In my opinion this is due either to faulty technique in the performance of tests or tampering with the patient or the samples. The performance of the tests by a reliable laboratory at least will simplify our problems.

I fully realize your many responsibilities and I know that you are not looking for added ones. However, we are in such desperate need for your services in this matter that I don't know what we can do without your help.

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(Cont.)

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.

Please advise me as soon as possible as to your decision. If you decide to cooperate with us, please send me some lead-free containers for blood and urine (and feces if you think it necessary). There is at present a case which we are to study before January 1. I sincerely hope that you will assist us in this and future cases.

Very truly yours,

Walter J. Siebert M.D.
Walter J. Siebert, M.D., Pathologist
St. Joseph's Hospital
Alton, Illinois

WJS:mb
Encs.

P.S. Mr. Baetz informs me that the matter is of such importance to the Western Cartridge Company that expenses are of minor importance.

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