

June 7, 1971

Robert A. Goyer, M.D.  
Professor of Pathology  
The University of North Carolina  
School of Medicine  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514

Dear Doctor Goyer:

I have read (and studied) your review of the literature on LEAD AND THE KIDNEY, including the discussion of your own highly productive work, and have found it more than interesting. It is, I believe, the most thorough and detailed coverage of the subject in medical literature (so far as I know the latter), and I have learned from your paper a great deal about matters that have not been dealt with in my own work.

In indicating to you that what I have said above is not merely a courteous compliment on my part, let me say that for the past year and a half I have been engaged in two types of editorial work and writing - one in preparing a series of papers on various aspects of the subject, as presented at Amsterdam, The Netherlands, some time ago (some very poorly, others quite satisfactorily, in everything but form) for publication in the Archives of Environmental Health; the other, in preparing an article on lead and in editing a series of articles on other trace metals (prepared by colleagues in the Kettering Laboratory) for a chapter in an International Encyclopedia of Pharmacology and Therapeutics, which is soon to be published. In the course of this work, I have had to familiarize myself (as well as my training, experience and knowledge would permit) with a large group of publications on various aspects of the trace metals. I cannot say that I am enough of a biochemist, on the one hand, and a skilled electron microscopist, on the other, to follow all of the reactions that are known, suspected, or postulated, to occur in the tissues and cells of the complex organism, so that my basis for sound judgment is not as satisfactory as I could wish, but I am not talking loosely when I speak highly of your work. I do not accept as settled, all of the discussions which have suggested or indicated the probable nature of the involvement of the kidney in lead poisoning, but as a student of pathology and of pathogenesis, I think I know something about pathologic evidence and I follow you with respect and admiration. We have suffered dreadfully, in this complex field from the mouthings of many people who know nothing of evidence but express their feelings freely, about all sorts of things about which they have no (or little) knowledge.

What I like most in your approach to the more controversial matters, is your concept of the continuing work which can be expected to reveal some of the answers to matters which are obscure. This is one of the things which seems not to be even vaguely understood by some of the administrators of our affairs in the country. By which I do not mean that we should postpone, indefinitely, decisions which may affect the health and welfare of our people, but there should be some sense of the urgency or the lack of it in taking decisive action. This, I think, is the real issue in much of the field of the environment, about which, I agree, that we must take certain actions. The judgments have to be made by people who have some chance of knowing the

Robert A. Goyer, M.D.

Page 2

June 7, 1971

consequences of their action, or of inaction, until some clarification of the issue has been achieved. Otherwise, the outcome of our efforts must become a political football. I cannot see our society finding its way in these difficult matters by anything other than hard work and sound judgment based on facts, rather than popular notions.

You may not see what I bring this letter into this arena, but I am convinced that yours is a relevant attitude in dealing with current issues.

You said nothing about my returning your paper with my comments, but unless you wish me to do otherwise, I shall keep it.

Cordially yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.  
Professor Emeritus of  
Occupational Medicine

RAK:wb