

April 11, 1955

Dr. George L. Maison
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Dear George:

Thanks for your letter in reply to mine. I am glad to have any differences that may exist in our viewpoint out in the open where they can be viewed on medical and scientific grounds. I was confident that you would react as you have, and I didn't want you to have any lingering doubts as to my attitude.

I was not influenced unduly in my viewpoint by the efficacy or inefficacy of the oral preparation in removing lead from the body, nor was I prepared to say that the prolonged use of the material is dangerous. I merely pointed out that I did not have adequate evidence on which to judge. What I stressed was the undesirability of promoting the use of chelating of any kind as a substitute for the prevention of lead absorption. I must insist, and I have been at this a long time and I know whereof I speak, that it is fundamentally immoral to permit the existence of industrial conditions which give rise to dangerous levels of lead absorption among workmen. This can be prevented and it must be done. Moreover, when we as physicians substitute medical measures for control measures, we are doing harm rather than good.

The adults who have dangerously high concentrations of lead in their blood are not like the unfortunate victims of the unpredictable roads of many diseases. They have this condition, except for accidents and unusual situations, such as those that affect children, because their employer is ignorant, inept or irresponsible in matters of industrial hygiene. I agree that you, as a practicing physician, when such a man comes to you, may feel that, for his safety, you had better treat him to lessen his immediate danger of becoming ill. There is point in this, but actually it misses the point, because if you do this, and other doctors do this, and industrial physicians do this, and then send the man back to his work, the result is that dangerous situations in industry not only will continue to exist but will multiply. I am not too much disturbed by what a private physician may do about this, but I am deeply concerned that industrial physicians with the health officer's responsibility for the people under their preventive care, may fall for this false and pandering concept of preventive medicine, and will contribute to the wholly

Dr. George L. Maison - (2) - April 11, 1955

unnecessary risks of industrial lead exposure.

Now, you have got to ask yourself, in promoting this idea, not how you would apply it, but how physicians in the lead trades will apply it. I think I know the answer to this question, since I know many of these men, and have talked with them, and have been questioned by them, in conversations and in correspondence. I am not talking about a matter of morals as separate from life as it is, or of opinions, but of the cold hard facts, which in this industrial field I know comprehensively from years of direct experience.

I have not seen Dr. Karr's letter, and incidentally you forgot to attach a copy to your letter. I shall be interested in seeing it, but I do want to suggest to you and to him that you had better know what you are about in relation to the lead-using industries, and to the long and up-hill efforts of many years to bring good practice into them, before you put yourselves on the side of the devil.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

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