

CINCINNATI GENERAL HOSPITAL

February 8, 1938.

Dr. Robert A. Kehoe,
Laboratory of Applied Physiology,
Cincinnati College of Medicine,
Cincinnati, Ohio.

Dear Bob:

I have long thought that the custom of sending specimens without name or number haphazardly to your laboratory was an imposition on your good nature and no particular contribution to my service. I often wondered how it came about and just what good it did. I do not like continuing to do stupid things just because it is a custom.

Offhand, I would recommend discontinuing sending these specimens. I think the performance is distinctly misleading, unless the information that your laboratory runs negative tests on patients that are definitely known to have taken mercury is a contribution. I am sure that a dangerous dose of mercury can be ingested, the patient be very ill from mercury nephritis, and yet stools or urine show unimportant amounts of mercury. Therefore unless the circumstances are more clearly described at the time of taking the specimen the whole performance can, from the nature of the problem, be quite stupid. What do you recommend that we do: Discontinue it entirely? Or occasionally send specimens where the diagnosis is in doubt, but sending such information as might make the test of value?

I appreciate your formal letter and also the appended note. Is there any part of the mercury problem, such as we have, in which you would have an interest? Is there anything we can do for you in connection with mercury or other poisons?

Sincerely yours,

M. A. Blankenhorn, M. D.,
Director,
Department of Internal Medicine.