

October 13, 1945

Dr. G. H. Gehrman,
E. I. du Pont Company,
du Pont Building,
Wilmington 98, Delaware.

Dear Gehrman:

I find that I neglected to prepare a memorandum on the results of my last visit to Baton Rouge. Inasmuch as I shall be going there soon I shall not bother to prepare such a memorandum at this late date. However, I do want to call your attention to several matters which are of some consequence. I find also that in my hurry to get these disposed of I neglected to bring them to your attention through copies of my letters to Dr. Rankin. I enclose copies of these letters at this time to make up for my neglect. A few additional comments may be useful to you.

Some nine or ten months ago, you will remember, we had a series of cases of acute tetraethyl lead poisoning as a result of the exposure of a group of workmen engaged in digging a deep trench through an area contaminated with tetraethyl lead by reason of leakage of the latter from the main drainage line into the surrounding soil. Several of these men were hospitalized at the time, and all but one were able to be discharged from the hospital without undue delay. Two of these men, Whitfield and Taylor, still maintain that they are unable to work. These men continue on compensation. I examined them both shortly before I went abroad in May and I concluded at that time that they were well enough to return to work. Both had relatively high lead concentrations in the urine, however, and it was obviously inadvisable to return them to work involving any lead exposure until they had reached the level which we have established as compatible with safety in that regard. During my absence and until I had a chance to return to Baton Rouge Dr. Rankin maintained them in status quo, and they consistently found themselves unable to return to work. Therefore, at the time of my last visit I asked Dr. Rankin to get together all the necessary clinical information, to re-examine them, and to obtain additional samples for analysis. This has now been done, and as you will note in my last letter I have advised that from my point of view their status as compensation cases should be terminated. I am not sure but I believe that under the terms of the agreement between Ethyl and du Pont, these would continue to be du Pont compensation cases. That is a matter of very little importance to me, since I would have brought the cases to your attention anyhow. However, if that is true, you may well have some advice to offer in connection with their disposition.

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The situation of [REDACTED] is somewhat different in that this man had an acute mental state which we interpreted as being the result of tetraethyl lead intoxication primarily. This man, a negro, has been in the General Hospital in Baton Rouge and continues there at the present time in the care of Dr. Noto. He has a definite psychotic state, although at the present time he is greatly improved over his original condition. Whereas he was violent and noisy, he is now reasonably well behaved and tractable. However, he does not want to leave the hospital and in his present state of mind will simply not be moved. His clinical picture is complicated by a strongly positive Wasserman reaction, and now that his lead excretion is well within normal limits there is no reason why he should not have adequate antiluetic therapy. Feeling that we were in a somewhat delicate situation, and moreover recognizing that we had not had entirely adequate medical advice, I met with his doctor and Dr. Rankin at the time of my visit and recommended that we obtain the consultation services of a neuro-psychiatrist. There being no such competent man in Baton Rouge, one of the men from New Orleans was selected. He has made a full examination and has submitted his report. I am not sure that Dr. Rankin has provided you with a copy of this report, but if not, I will see that he does. If he did not, it was probably the result of both his and my state of confusion over the rather sudden change in our medical responsibilities at Baton Rouge. As you will note in my letter I felt we had no choice but to follow the consultant's recommendations. They seem to be wise, and under the circumstances we would be in a very awkward position if we did not follow them. It seems best to wait and see subsequent developments as a basis for our own further action. I am sure that both Dr. Rankin and I would appreciate any advice or assistance which you may wish to give.

With kindest personal regards,

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

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