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Decry Poor Turnout For Lead Poison Test

Spokesmen for the Hunts Point Health Planning Council expressed disappointment yesterday over the poor turnout Tuesday for the start of a testing program for lead poisoning among children in the Hunts Point community.

"Obviously we did not do enough planning and publicity," said Dr. Richard Izquierdo, chairman of the council. "We kept open the San Juan Medical Center from 5 to 9 in the evening and only conducted six tests."

A mobile testing unit also was stationed at 174th St. and Southern Blvd., but it, too, tested only six children. The illness is usually contracted by eating peelings of lead-based paint and plaster in old tenements.

Find 40 Victims

A one-day community health campaign was conducted in the area last month. Out of 435 children tested, 40 were found to be suffering from lead poisoning. Eight of them were hospitalized.

Dr. Stanley B. Kahane, director of community medicine at Bronx-Lebanon Hospital, which conducted the tests in cooperation with the Hunts Point Community Corp., called the situation "the largest single epidemic ever to hit a particular age group in the city."

The Health Planning Council, made up of 35 Bronx civic groups and hospitals, has been meeting

with representatives of the city to devise plans to assure the testing of all children between the ages of 1 and 6 in the area. "The summer is a particularly dangerous time for lead poisoning," Kahane said, "because the sun causes the bones to release the accumulated lead into the bloodstream."

Must Take Action

"We have to get them out of those dangerous apartments," he continued, "and if we don't find places elsewhere in the city, we'll have to put them in summer camps."

Paul Mejias, board chairman of the Bronx Children's Psychiatric Hospital has offered space for the victims. A telegram has been sent to Gov. Rockefeller requesting approval for the offer.

The schedule for future testing has not been completed yet. However, persons wishing to have their children tested are urged to call WY 2-4200 and ask for Mrs. Dixon. She will advise them of where and when tests will be conducted.

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