

August 16, 1965

Dr. Rutherford T. Johnstone
Brockman Building
520 West Seventh Street
Los Angeles, California 90014

Dear Red:

The article in the New England Journal of Medicine concerning "stippling" of the retina, as referred to in your letter of July 12, is another example of "hokum." It stirred up some investigation, I am told, and it excited a few people, but so far as I can establish, no one who has had any experience in the examination of the eyegrounds of men subjected to significant degrees of exposure to lead has even considered the article to be worthy of comment.

I cannot submit documentary evidence which would discredit these alleged observations, and therefore I would not put out a formal statement. I can tell you, however, that my clinical associates (such as Henry Ryder and Bill Ashe, for example) have examined the eyegrounds in quite a series of frank cases of lead poisoning, without observing any such phenomena. I would not even cite my own similar experience, in competition with such expert observers. Pallor is seen, of course, and this has been substantiated by examination of the eyegrounds of poisoned animals; likewise constriction of the retinal vessels is clearly evident; even hemorrhage is seen occasionally. Beyond these lesions nothing else has appeared.

We might clinch the matter, if a few of us were to refer bona fide cases of plumbism to certain expert ophthalmologists for some thorough going investigation, including microscopic examination. I shall call this to the attention of our clinical people for following up.

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August 10, 1965

Incidentally, as you must know, I have retired from the Directorship of this Department and Laboratory. After a period of consultation with Jack Bloomfield (Pan American Sanitary Bureau) in Santiago, Chile, I expect to return to a quiet corner in the Kettering Laboratory, in order to assemble and examine the data of our experimental work for the past fifteen years, to review the literature, and to write a monograph (possibly more than one). This may not be feasible here, for a number of reasons, but we shall see. Meanwhile, I can be reached through the Laboratory.

With best regards.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.

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