

February 25, 1963

Gilbert N. Silbiger, M.D.
33140 Aurora Road
Solon, Ohio

Dear Doctor Silbiger:

Mr. Cholak has given your letter of February 15th to me, since the problem with which you are presented is primarily medical, and since it is not possible to advise you satisfactorily without knowing more about it.

First, let me point out that while we are prepared to give appropriate aid to our colleagues in industry, the first consideration is that of knowing the situation that is to be dealt with and advising the best, and at the same time, the quickest and most economical solution of it.

Second, this Laboratory engages primarily in research and only secondarily in service, and it cannot make its services available for fees, but only for learning and teaching, and unless we learn and, through consultations, engage in instruction, we are in the wrong position as a University unit of research and instruction. We do make a charge for our services to cover the actual cost to us of performing the service (when it is feasible to do so), but this is done purely to preserve our funds earmarked for research against unavoidable dissipation in service activities.

All of this is by way of explanation, which seems to me to be necessary, of why we require as complete information as possible about the plants and the processes, as well as the workmen, their jobs and their medical problems. Every analysis of the blood or urine or both has significance and requires interpretation on the background of the occupational exposure of the workmen from whom the sample or samples have been obtained. The analyses are troublesome to do and expensive, and their number and distribution (in time and within the population of the plant) should be tailored to meet the occupational conditions and the requirements of the health of the employees. There is nothing mysterious about this, but it has taken us many years to learn how to get the most out of our work, and to transmit the information to the professional people concerned with a specific problem, so that they can act capably and responsibly.

With these matters in mind, I suggest that you write to me giving me such a description of the plant its processes and its product

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or products, the size of its population (from the aspect of exposure to lead), your experience to date, if any, with cases of actual or suspected or alleged lead poisoning, and any other matters which you think would be helpful to my interpretation of the situation. I shall then give you the advice of which I am capable as to the best and most economical way of proceeding.

Sometimes it is necessary to survey a plant before one can make satisfactory recommendations for the establishment of such an analytical regimen as you have in mind. I hope that this will not be necessary in this instance, but that between us in correspondence we can come to a reasonably satisfactory plan of action. If, however, you should think it desirable to visit us or have us visit you, this can be done. The matter of importance is that we have a sound understanding between us, of what we are attempting to do, and of the conditions which have to be met. The details concerning the samples of blood or urine, while important, are of much less importance than the adaptation of a program of sampling to the specific requirements of your problem.

I shall be pleased to hear from you promptly, and despite the pressure of other matters, I shall do my best to avoid further delay in advising you how we can proceed.

Cordially yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

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