



Baltimore Research Institute Sued for Exposing Children to Lead

September 23, 2011 by *Patrick A. Malone*

Here's a "does this still happen in America?" moment: A class-action lawsuit has been filed against a Baltimore hospital for letting children be exposed to high levels of lead *as part of a study*.

According to AboutLawsuits.com, the subjects involved in the Kennedy Krieger Institute study in the 1990s were poor, minority children living in homes with high levels of toxic lead paint. Researchers wanted to observe the health effects, and failed to inform the parents that their children might be at risk.

Lead paint is toxic. It can cause irreversible brain damage, growth retardation, coma and other serious problems. We [drew this ugly picture](#) a couple of years ago. Although it was banned more than 30 years ago, many old and/or poorly maintained homes contain flaking paint that can cause lead poisoning if it is eaten or sucked on, as youngsters are prone to do.

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In the study, some families were moved into homes with less lead contamination, and others were allowed to remain in lead paint-contaminated homes without being told about the health effects or the lead levels. The plaintiffs claim that Kennedy Krieger selected poor and minority test subjects to stay in contaminated homes, while generally selecting white and more affluent children as those to be moved into safer homes.

On its website, Kennedy Krieger says it's dedicated "to helping children and adolescents with disorders of the brain, spinal cord and musculoskeletal system achieve their potential and participate as fully as possible in family, school and community life." It's a nonprofit hospital and research institute whose Lead-Based Paint Abatement and Repair and Maintenance Study began in 1993. The objective was to find affordable ways to reduce the risk of lead-paint poisoning for children living in older homes and apartments.

Institute officials deny that they targeted poor and minority children to remain in contaminated homes, and say that the study has led to vast improvements in lead-based paint abatement policies. The study was conducted in 13 cities nationwide and sanctioned by the federal government. Kennedy Krieger officials say it led to a 93% drop in the number of lead poisoning cases in Baltimore.

According to AboutLawsuits, the institute has settled several claims out of court, and in 2001, the Maryland Court of Appeal ruled that Kennedy Krieger officials knew that some families were living in homes with dangerous levels of lead contamination and knew the children there were suffering from elevated blood lead levels, but failed to inform those families that their children had elevated levels of lead in their blood in a timely manner.

Families interested in learning more about our firm's legal services, including legal representation for children who have suffered serious injuries in Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia due to medical malpractice, defective products, birth-related trauma or other injuries, may ask questions or send us information about a particular case by phone or email. There is no charge for contacting us regarding your inquiry. An attorney will respond within 24 hours.

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