SECOND OPINIONS

‘Needless’ lead testing

Mike Shannon’s recommendations on universal lead testing (AAP News, June 2002) may be well-intentioned, but his science is even worse.

Universal testing might have been warranted in the 1970s, but today it is nothing short of child abuse.

The state of Alaska has tested more than 960 Medicaid kids and only one exceeded the cut-off level of 10 micrograms per deciliter — all the way up to 11! Our state of Washington has tested a random sample of more than 780 toddlers, and less than 1% had levels above 10 micrograms per deciliter. They, too, were barely elevated. Wyoming, Idaho, California, etc., have had comparable results.

While cigarette smoking is still so prevalent — while abuse of alcohol and other chemicals also remains popular — I’d urge we invest our limited resources on these types of real-world problems and stay away from having the feds continue to mandate that we all continue to search for “aliens from outer space” (Pb poisoning) where they simply don’t exist.

Needlessly poking kids with needles is hardly an acceptable public posture for the Academy in the first place; put the onus of decision-making about whom to test back at the state level where it belongs.

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