



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HOSPITALS
1493 CAMBRIDGE STREET
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139
498-1349

MELVIN H. CHALFEN, M.D.
COMMISSIONER

December 14, 1983

Mr. Robert Healy
City Manager
Cambridge City Hall
Cambridge, MA 02138

Dear Mr. Healy:

The attached memo outlines our proposed plan for dealing with lice in the Cambridge schools. While lice is a minor medical illness, we recognize the public concern in regard to this matter and wish to take this opportunity to address that concern in a different way than in the past. Mr. Brown and Ms. Mary Lou McGrath of the School Department have reviewed and agree with the program.

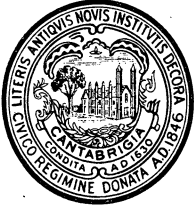
In order to deal with the problem effectively, only direct action will work. While parental education and dispensing of prescriptions might be helpful, I do not believe it will allay the public's concern at this time. As the attached memorandum outlines, the components of an effective program must include:

1. Surveillance
2. An exclusionary policy for infested children
3. A direct lice treatment program based at the hospital or school department for appropriate permission slips, etc., for the treatment program
4. Transportation arrangements to facilitate the treatment program do not appear to be necessary as Mr. Brown feels that treatment as described can be given in the schools.

This approach is both more aggressive and more interventionist than remedies sought by other communities. Nonetheless, given the amount of concern and the chronicity of the problem, this effort seems warranted. I would recommend that we implement all the items with a start-up target date to begin immediately after the Christmas holiday.

Sincerely,

Melvin H. Chalfen, M.D.
Commissioner of Health & Hospitals



The Cambridge Hospital

Affiliated with
Harvard Medical School



December 8, 1983

MEMORANDUM

FROM: Bridget Hanson, M.D., Director of School Health Services.
TO: Melvin Chalfen, M.D., Commissioner of Health and Hospitals ^{BH}
RE: Treatment of Lice in School Children

The two steps necessary for controlling head lice are detection and treatment. In the past one of our major problems has been the failure of parents to treat children once they have been found to have lice. If these children remain in school untreated, they will continue to be a source of head lice for other children; excluding untreated children from school is essential in controlling lice in the school.

As you know, the school nurses are spread thin and cannot be in every school every day. Because of our limited manpower, cooperation from parents and the School Department will be most important in successfully reducing the problem.

I would like to propose the following plan to address the problem of lice in the schools.

- Parent volunteers will be trained to detect lice and nits and be "deputized" as Health Department Aides.
- When a child is found to have nits or live lice, his parent will be called and offered the following options:
 1. The parent will treat the child at home.
 2. The child may be treated by School or Health Department personnel.
 3. The parent will be told that the child cannot return to school untreated.

The Health Department Aides will check the heads of all children in the classroom and additional cases treated. A note will be sent home with all children in the classroom letting the parents know of the potential exposure to lice, and asking them to check their child's head.

- Treatment (shampooing) will be provided at a central treatment center. This could be at the hospital or in the school department.
- If a parent elects to treat a child at home, the child will be examined prior to returning to his or her classroom. If the child returns to school untreated the health Aide will inform the Master,

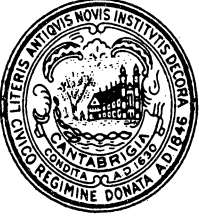
who will dismiss the child from school.

The advantage in our providing treatment is that we will ensure that the child is treated. The disadvantages include cost, and disruption of the school day. The program might be modified to include a school-wide check for lice after the Christmas vacation.

Steps necessary to implement this plan include:

- Training parent volunteers as Health Aides.
- Providing transportation to the central treatment site.
- Providing personnel and materials for treatment and settling on a location for the treatment site.
- Instructing School Department personnel and school nurses in the working of the plan.

I hope this is helpful to you in providing an approach to the problem of lice in the schools.



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139
Tel. 498-9011

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

December 19, 1983

To the Honorable, the City Council:

With respect to Awaiting Report Item No. 25 relative to Health Department procedures dealing with the detection of the presence of lice in children and the steps being taken to deal with this situation, enclosed please find copy of a report from Melvin H. Chalfen, M.D., Commissioner of Health and Hospitals.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mbf
Enc.

S-698

Re: response to Awaiting Report Item No. 25
regarding Health Dept. procedures dealing
with the detection of the presence of lice
in children & steps being taken to deal
with this situation.

In City Council,

December 19, 1983

12/19/83
Placed
on
File