

The Thalidomide Trust

A Simple Timeline

- 1954 Thalidomide is created by Chemie Grunenthal, a German pharmaceutical company.
- 1956 25 December: The first Thalidomide-affected baby is born in Germany on to a Chemie Grunenthal employee.
- 1958 In April, Thalidomide is licensed for distribution in the UK, by Distillers Company (Biochemicals) Ltd ('Distillers'), under the brand name Distaval. The sedative was promoted as a 'wonder drug' to treat a range of conditions including headaches, insomnia and morning sickness in pregnant women – adverts emphasised the drug's safety using phrases such as 'non-toxic' and 'no known toxicity'.
- 1961 A letter is published in *The Lancet* from an Australian doctor, William McBride, for the first time publicly making the link between Thalidomide and birth defects.
26 November: the drug is formally withdrawn by Chemie Grunenthal in Germany.
2 December: Distillers, the UK distributor, follows suit.
- 1962 The Thalidomide Society is established in the UK by a group of parents of babies affected by Thalidomide.

Writs are issues by families of 62 Thalidomide-affected babies born in the UK (within months of the deadline of 3 years from conception) to secure compensation
- 1968 A sum equivalent to 40% of assessed damages is awarded to the 62 Thalidomide-affected children from Distillers – the result of an initial (infant) settlement, following a legal battle led by their families with little or no media support.

Chemie Grunenthal is brought to trial in Germany charged with intent to commit bodily harm and involuntary manslaughter.
- 1970 The trial against Chemie Grunenthal is brought to a premature end by the German government stating that the trial was 'not in the public interest'.
- 1972 A Sunday Times-led campaign is launched in the UK to secure a substantial level of compensation for Thalidomide-affected children in the UK.
- 1973 Building on the 1968 settlement, a final settlement is agreed by Distillers. This includes a lump-sum payment for a further 367 children affected by Thalidomide in the UK (on the same basis as the initial 62) together with the establishment of the Thalidomide Trust (into which Distillers paid £20 million) to provide 'support and assistance' – including annual grants - to all Thalidomide survivors.
- 2004 Following a campaign led by the Thalidomide Trust's National Advisory Council (NAC), in July the Government announces that compensation payments made to UK Thalidomide survivors will be tax-free.
- 2005 Diageo – formed in 1997 by a merger between Grand Metropolitan and Guinness (who took over Distillers in 1990) – agrees an increased financial settlement with the Thalidomide Trust.
- 2010 In January the UK Government announces that it will provide a Health Grant to all Thalidomide survivors in the UK to help meet the increased health needs caused by their Thalidomide damage, initially for a three year pilot period.
- 2012 The Health Departments in all four nations of the UK agree to pay the Health Grant for a ten year period until 2022.