

Globe and Mail Letter regarding Thalidomide (November 29, 2014)

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When I was in family practice, a pharmaceutical rep visited my office just as thalidomide was about to appear on the market in Canada. He hyped the drug for morning sickness – bragging that the industry had computerized the results of control studies, getting results in six months that would normally take years.

I commented that a pregnancy takes nine months and even that was insufficient to assure safety from serious side effects. I refused to prescribe the drug to the 50 patients yearly whose babies I delivered – an immense stroke of good luck that all Canadians might have benefited from if Health Canada had had the courage to deny authorizing thalidomide in the face of inadequate safety documentation.

The pharmaceutical industry is still involved in the worldwide lobbying of health authorities to fast-track authorization of new drugs. If they are successful, there will be more drug disasters.

*Gavin Hamilton, MD, London, Ont.*