Editorial: Thalidomide in Thalassemia: A Fortune in Making

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Assistant Professor of Haematology, Northwest School of Medicine, Peshawar Thalidomide is the unfortunate drug which got entangled in the greatest iatrogenic catastrophe in human history(1). In 1950s, deemed safe and ?miraculous?, the drug was prescribed to pregnant women with nausea and insomnia. By that time nobody knew about its teratogenic potential. This culminated in around 10000 births with severe morbidities. In the aftermath, thalidomide was banned immediately all over the world(1).

The drug however, never seized to loose attention. The first rational indication was identified for Leprosy by Dr Jacob Sheskin in 1964(2). In 1990s, Dr Judah Folkman demonstrated utility of thalidomide in treating Multiple Myeloma(3). These indications portray the anti-inflammatory, immunomodulatory and anti-cancer properties of the drug, which have been pursued in other similar diseases as well. At current, literature reports efficacy of thalidomide in several dermatological, rheumatological, gastrointestinal, cardiac and malignant diseases(4). Of particular significance is the role in thalassemia, a well-known haematological disease.