

Victims: Thalidomide sold in Spain post-withdrawal

May 8 2013, by Jorge Sainz

(AP)—Spanish victims of thalidomide on Wednesday published documents they claim prove a German drug company kept distributing the notorious drug in Spain six months after it was taken off the market in other countries.

Gruenenthal withdrew thalidomide in 1961. It had been prescribed to pregnant women mostly to combat [morning sickness](#) but led to a wave of birth defects in Europe, Australia, Canada and Japan. The company has refused to accept liability, but last year it apologized to victims and has set up a fund for German ones.

The Spanish Association of Thalidomide Victims released documents it said prove the distributor delivered thalidomide tablets to Spain until May 1962.

But Gruenenthal's vice-president for corporate affairs, Frank Schonrock, insisted in comments emailed to The Associated Press that his company pulled the drug in Spain at the same time as in Germany.

The Spanish victims intend to present the documents about the distribution of thalidomide tablets when its lawsuit against Gruenenthal begins at a Madrid court on Oct. 14, said Jose Riquelme, head of the association, which has about 200 members.

The association is asking for 208 million euros (\$273 million) in compensation from the German manufacturer.

"We want to get back the dignity which the Germany pharmaceutical company took from us before we were born," Riquelme told a news conference in Madrid.

Last July, an Australian woman born without arms and legs after her mother took thalidomide reached a multimillion dollar settlement with the drug's British distributor. Gruenthal refused to settle. The lawsuit was part of a class action, and more than 100 other survivors expect to have their claims heard this year.

[Thalidomide](#) is still sold today, but as a treatment for [multiple myeloma](#), a bone marrow cancer, and [leprosy](#).

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Citation: Victims: Thalidomide sold in Spain post-withdrawal (2013, May 8) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-05-victims-thalidomide-sold-spain-post-withdrawal.html>

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