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Further animal experiments would not have prevented the Thalidomide disaster

The recent court victory of the Thalidomide case has generated much publicity about the worst drug disaster in history, and fuelled claims that further animal experiments (particularly on pregnant animals) may have prevented the incident. This is definitely not the case.

Thalidomide was tested on numerous animals prior to its introduction to humans however even after thousands of malformed babies were born researchers started conducting teratogenicity tests on pregnant animals and failed to produce similar malformations in numerable other species.

It was the White New Zealand rabbit which finally gave birth to deformed offspring, but only at a dose between 25 to 300 times that given to humans. It also eventually occurred in monkeys, but only at ten times the normal dose. The bottom line is that more animal testing would not have found the side effects, and even if they had tested on the White New Zealand rabbit, Thalidomide would still have gone to market since the vast majority of species showed no ill effect. It is only possible to produce specific deformities in specific species, and chances are the right species would never have been used

Chief Executive Officer, Helen Marston said today *"*Humans will always be the guinea pigs whenever a new drug goes to market as animal tests are not predictive of human outcomes. In fact according to the FDA's research, nine out of ten drugs deemed successful in animal tests fail in human clinical trials. Any other industry that boasts a 90% failure rate would be considered absurd."

Clearly drugs work on humans *despite* being tested on animals rather than *because* they have been tested on animals. It's also clear we should instead be embracing today's species-specific technologies – computer modeling, microdosing, micro-fluidic chips etc. – to ensure that the drugs released onto the market have been tested by the most scientifically-valid methodologies rather than relying on data extrapolated from a different species.

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