

McBride WG (1961). Thalidomide and congenital abnormalities. *Lancet* 2:1358.

Whole Article

THALIDOMIDE AND CONGENITAL ABNORMALITIES

SIR,—Congenital abnormalities are present in approximately 1·5% of babies. In recent months I have observed that the incidence of multiple severe abnormalities in babies delivered of women who were given the drug thalidomide ('Distaval') during pregnancy, as an antiemetic or as a sedative, to be almost 20%.

These abnormalities are present in structures developed from mesenchyme—i.e., the bones and musculature of the gut. Bony development seems to be affected in a very striking manner, resulting in polydactyly, syndactyly, and failure of development of long bones (abnormally short femora and radii).

Have any of your readers seen similar abnormalities in babies delivered of women who have taken this drug during pregnancy?

Hurstville, New South Wales.

W. G. McBRIDE.

*** In our issue of Dec. 2 we included a statement from the Distillers Company (Biochemicals) Ltd. referring to "reports from two overseas sources possibly associating thalidomide ('Distaval') with harmful effects on the foetus in early pregnancy". Pending further investigation, the company decided to withdraw from the market all its preparations containing thalidomide.—ED.L.