World Journal of Pharmaceutical and Life Sciences

www.wjpls.org

Impact Factor: 8.21 Coden USA: WJPLA7

DRUG-RELATED TRAGEDIES: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW ON SAFETY FAILURES IN PHARMACEUTICALS

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20269727

How to cite this Article: Aman Faiyaz*, Ashrubindu Bhunia, Dr. Beduin Mahanti*. (2026). Drug-Related Tragedies: A Comprehensive Review on Safety Failures In Pharmaceuticals. World Journal of Pharmaceutical and Life Sciences, 12(5), 386–395.

Article Received on 21/03/2026 **Article Revised on 11/04/2026** **Article Published on 01/05/2026**

ABSTRACT

Here in, review into the past, present, and future constituencies of drug tragedies, where drug treatment for adverse effect brought remedies. Historically, drug tragedies have evolved the term pharmacovigilance, due to not only a proactive progression towards safety, but it has consisted of successive reactive measures found by public disaster. This paper systematically examines the "Cycle of Tragedy," commencing with the 1937 Elixir Sulfanilamide catastrophe, which fundamentally redefined the regulatory role, labeling overseer to a safety guardian. Also looked into the Thalidomide crisis of the late 1950s and early 1960s, which was a turning point that showed how important it was to test for teratogenicity and showed the importance of phase-I, phase-II, phase-III clinical trials within importance of Kefauver-Harris Amendment. While reviewing some of the major events, we found hidden tragedies associated with Diethylstilbestrol (DES), Rofecoxib (Vioxx), tragedy of opioids due to failure of regulatory system as there is more than one toxic molecule, tragedy of NSAID Diclofenac Sodium, ongoing problem of contamination of global cough syrup chains with diethylene glycol that results in children's death in developing countries and thus demonstrates an acute need for more robust manufacturing controls (recently Coldrif cough syrup tragedy in India). The fourth issue we consider concerns the present state of affairs in terms of the use of Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning. We argue that while the regulatory strategy aims to be "predictive" as opposed to "reactive," historical precedents of the last century prove that constant vigilance is necessary. The review draws attention to the "price of progress" and suggests that ethical standards demand a halt to science outpacing humans.

KEYWORDS: Constituencies, Catastrophe, Egregious, Inadequacies, Ethics, Ingenuit.

INTRODUCTION

The history of medicine is a history of the triumph of human ingenuity over disease and suffering, and the history of pharmacology is littered with counter-examples. To read a modern drug label or a safety warning is to read a document written in blood, nearly every major pharmaceutical regulation we rely on today was not the result of a boardroom's foresight, but the product of a community's grief. In review drug tragedies birthed the regulatory standards that is implemented today.

During the early 20th century, drugs were sold on a "buyer beware" basis with unregulated elixirs, having false and fraudulent claims, and many drugs that were more lucrative than they were safe. Another disaster reported in 1937 with in news of Elixir Sulfanilamide, where the untested solvent turned a miracle cure into a deadly poison, and a long, painful death for more than a hundred people, mostly children, opened the eyes of the world to the need for government to proof of safety before a medicine is put in a syringe or a bottle. On progression, the complexity of these disasters only escalated. While the Thalidomide scare of the 1960s uncovered an alarming gap in the safety of reproduction, the more recent examples of the Vioxx scandal and the Opioid Crisis have highlighted the issue of marketing ethics and the requirement for post-market monitoring.

Still in 2026, the specters remain, as seen from recent global incidents of pediatric drug contamination and the looming regulation of AI-generated chemical compounds.

This review work does not merely serve as a history of medical mistakes but, rather, as an examination of the changing balance between the advancement of medicine and the fragility of humanity. This review work seeks to explain how the tragedy of each case prompted a transition from crisis management to the highly advanced pharmacovigilance techniques seen in today's world. Reflecting on such cases is not simply about evaluating the statistics; it is about respecting the memory of those victims by creating a better world for future patients.

History of Drug Tragedies

The pharmaceutical industry's "dark ages," which includes an era of poorly formulated drugs and unethical research/clinical trials, has tarnished the history of medicine. The Sulfanilamide crisis was a shocking event that occurred in 1937; one hundred patients died because diethylene glycol was used as a solvent to dissolve the medications delivered to those patients (the pain of that process was also included in the process of their deaths). The Thalidomide catastrophe of 1960-1962 was perhaps the most egregious example of a teratogenic drug. Its use resulted in thousands of babies born with severely malformed limbs and phocomelia. DES, or Diethylstilbestrol, was prescribed to pregnant women and had devastating long-term effects on multiple generations of women. Rare vaginal cancers were among the long-lasting effects of the drug that were exhibited by numerous women. Examples of the unethical practice of experimentation involving humans also existed (not just in the case of the Nazi physicians) and include the Tuskegee syphilis experiment (where penicillin was withheld for more than 40 (1932-1972) years from participants in the study even though administering the drug would have saved lives), and the intentional inoculation of healthy individuals in Guatemala.

These examples of tragedy ultimately prompted the enactment of strict laws and regulations throughout the world to ensure the safety and efficacy of drugs. The Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act of 1938 required all companies to demonstrate evidence of safety through pre-marketing studies prior to introducing their products to the market; the Drug Amendments of 1962 extended that requirement to include that a manufacturer must demonstrate efficacy before marketing their products with specific uses. Protecting human subjects in research is thus guaranteed through the implementation of a variety of laws including requirements for an Investigational New Drug (IND) Application for the conduct of clinical trials, a New Drug Approval (NDA) Application for the conduct of all clinical trials, and an Abbreviated New Drug Approval (ANDA) Application for the marketing ofgeneric drugs. The ultimate safety net for patients consists of the monitoring of drug safety (pharmacovigilance) and required post-marketing Phase IV studies/copyrights; all three components of the safety net serve to continuously assess the safety of drugs throughout the entire life of the drug.

Major Drug Tragedies In The History

1) Sulfanilamide

The 1937 sulfanilamide tragedy changed the way of prescription medications are regulated by Federal government actions/policies both before and after this event happened.

Core Drug Profile

- Drug Category: Anti-bacterial drugs
- Mechanism of action: The drug works by competitively inhibiting the enzymatic actions of Para-Aminobenzoic Acid (PABA) and therefore blocks the creation of folic acid, a necessary component for cell synthesis.
- Manufacturer: S. E. Massengill Company
- Previous Use: Sulfanilamide was used as an antibacterial for both vaginal yeast infections and as first aide for infection.
- Date of Incident: 1937 (In the U.S.)

Controversy Surrounding the Drug

- Reason Leading to the 1937 Tragedy: In order to meet the public demand for a liquid antibiotic form, the drug was dissolved in diethyl glycol (a type of poisonous antifreeze).
- Corporation Conducting no Toxicity Testing: The company tested the drug for taste and aroma only, which was not required by law at that time and therefore they never tested the drug for toxicity
- Side Effects: The victims suffered 7 days up to 21 days of agony from renal failure, seizures, and severe pain.
- Death Toll: More than 100 deaths, with a horrible impact on prescribers such as Dr. A. S. Calhoun.[3]

Responses to the Tragedy to Regulate Potentially Dangerous Prescription Drugs

- FDA action to remove Sulfanilamide from the marketplace: A "manhunt" was initiated to locate the remaining 234 gallons (and 1 pint) of the 240 gallons of sulfanilamide and remove them from the market.
- Evidence Support of Sulfanilamide's Removal from the Marketplace: The FDA seized the drug as being "misbranded," defining it as "a liquid elixir" that must contain alcohol and therefore should not have been sold in non-alcoholic form.
- Legislative development as a consequence of the tragedy: The sulfanilamide tragedy led to the enactment of the Federal Food and Drug Act in 1938.
- Reforms established by the 1938 Federal Food and Drug Act that resulted from the sulfanilamide tragedy relates to all new drugs".

Fig: Sulfanilamide.

Fig: Thalidomide Tragedy.

2) Thalidomide Tragedy

The thalidomide tragedy has become the perfect representation of the "monsters" created by modern medical arrogance and the need for constant caution.

The Main Drug Profile

- Category: First introduced in1958 as an anticonvulsant in Germany.
- Manufacturer: Chemie Grünenthal, located in West Germany.
- Primary Uses: Many doctors prescribed the drug to pregnant women for the treatment of morning sickness, high blood pressure, migraine headaches, and insomnia.
- Distribution Location: By 1961, thalidomide was readily available in Europe and being utilized by children born in43 different countries.

The Disaster

- Cause of the Disaster: Prenatal exposure shattered the myth that the baby was safe inside the womb.
- Total Number of Injured Children: 8,000+ worldwide from parents taking the drug while they were pregnant.
- Abnormalities: Infants were identified as having "thalidomide embryopathy" characterized by phocomelia (missing or malformed limbs), congenital heart defects, facial paralysis (facial nerve problems), and many different abnormalities in internal organs.
- Risk Window: Infants with significant birth defects (20-30%) were exposed to thalidomide from 35 to 48 days after their last menstrual period.[2]

Response and Regulation

- USA: The FDA did not allow use of thalidomide due to worry about issues with peripheral neuropathy, which prevented a massive tragedy in the United States.
- Worldwide Recall: The worldwide withdrawal of thalidomide began by the early1960s
- The Re-issue of thalidomide: The FDA allowed thalidomide, but with very strict stipulations for the treatment of erythema nodosum in 1998.

3) Vioxx Controversy

Rofecoxib (Vioxx) was a popular pain relief medicine whose removal from the market demonstrates major inadequacies in how the pharmaceutical industry reports on safety hazards.

Core Drug Information

- Drug Type: A non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) that prevents inflammation by inhibiting the COX-2 enzyme (rather than the COX-1 enzyme, which protects the stomach lining). This allows for effective pain relief without the risk of peptic ulcers as with other NSAIDs.
- Produced By: Merck & Co.
- Used For: Osteoarthritis, acute pain, and dysmenorrhea.
- Withdrawal Date: 2004 (in the US.)

Immediate Events

- Causes: Long-term/high-usage of this medication has associated increased incidences of heart attack/stroke
- Failings: Disclosures indicated that Merck withheld information regarding the cardiovascular risks of the medication from healthcare providers and the general population for over five years.
- Results: It is estimated to have caused between 88,000 - 140,000 people to develop serious heart disease.

Regulatory Response

- Merck voluntarily removed rofecoxib from the market on September 30, 2004.
- It had been the most widely prescribed drug in history until its recall.
- The event raised questions regarding pharmaceutical regulation and prompted a complete review of the drug regulation process.

4) Diethylstilbestrol (DES) Case

Diethylstilbestrol (DES) has a place in history as an example of failed medicine and is the first significant example of drug use that caused harm over multiple generations through transplacental exposure.

Basic profile

- Type: Synthetic estrogen and steroid.
- Uses: Originally approved for menopausal symptoms, atrophic vaginitis, and inhibition of milk after delivery; however, most notably given to an estimated six million pregnant women who were to help prevent miscarriages.
- Period/Geographic Use: US use from 1938 to 1971, World use in some countries until 1986.

Catastrophic nature

- The use of DES to pregnant women, resulted in devastating long-term effect on multiple generations.
- Impact on DES daughters exposed in utero to DES who have a 40 times greater chance of developing rare clear cell adenocarcinoma of the vagina/cervix; and a greater tendency toward infertility and greater risk of complications in childbearing.
- Impact on DES mothers and sons: increased risk of breast cancer for mothers and possible risk of testicular cancer and abnormal development of the reproductive organs in the sons.

Fig: Vioxx Tablet.

Government response/regulation

- In a 1971 report, the New England Journal of Medicine published definitive evidence of the incidence of rare vaginal tumors in young women associated with prenatal exposure. Thus, establishing a scientific milestone related to the report.
- DES is classified as an established human carcinogen.
- The regulatory footprint of the tragedy of DES on the relationship zwischen pharmaceutical industry and medicine

5) Opioid Crisis

The epidemic of opioids in the US is widespread and serious. It began with the use of prescription medications that contain opioids. Now there is a proliferation of synthetic heroin.

Opioids are molecules that bind to the brain's and spinal cord's receptors, including the natural opiates (morphine and codeine), the semi-synthetic opioids (heroin and oxycodone), and the synthetic opioids (fentanyl and methadone).

While the poppy derivatives used in medicine were discovered in the 1800s, the current crisis of opioid abuse has accelerated since the 1980s, when attitudes regarding the treatment of chronic non-cancer pain changed.

In 1996 pain was added as the "fifth vital sign," and advocacy groups and pharmaceutical companies promoted this idea and encouraged physicians to be liberal in their prescribing of opioids. This resulted in a large increase in the number of prescriptions written for opioids.

The marketing of opioids included claims that the potential for addiction was less than 1%, which allowed for a large increase in the availability of prescription opiate medications.

More than 42000 Americans—approximately 115 per day—died in 2016, resulting in a 27% increase over 2015. The original crisis was driven by prescription opioids, but the majority of deaths now are attributed to the use of heroin and illegal fentanyl. The number of newborns suffering from neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) has increased by 400% from 2000 to 2012 as a result of women using prescription opioids during pregnancy.

The ability to distinguish between physical adaptation to opioids (tolerance) and physiological dependence on opioids adds to the complexity of the epidemic.[5]

6) Fenfluramine/Phentermine

Fenfluramine was a popular medication in the 1990's for the treatment of obesity before links to severe cardiovascular damage resulted in its withdrawal worldwide.

Core Drug Profile

- Category: Anorectic agent (anti-obesity).
- Mechanism of Action: As a racemic compound, fenfluramine is classified as a serotonin reuptake inhibitor because it promotes increases in serotonin by inhibiting the normal storage of serotonin in vesicles and reversing serotonin transporter (SERT) function. This results in a sensation of satiety and decreased appetite.
- Manufacturer: Wyeth.
- Primary Use: To assist in the treatment of obesity and/or weight control.
- Year of Withdrawal: 1997 (USA), 1998 (India).

The Disaster

- Incidents: As a result of the use of fenfluramine, pulmonary hypertension and cardiac valve disease (e.g., cardiac fibrosis) were reported.
- Norfenfluramine, the active metabolite of fenfluramine, is a potent agonist at 5-HT2B

receptors that are abundant in the human heart valves. The over-activation of 5-HT2B receptors promotes inappropriate cellular proliferation, resulting in thickening of the valve leaflets and chordae tendineae (heart-string like structures that support the valve leaflets).

- Long term consequences: A study of 5,743 former users of fenfluramine demonstrated that cardiac damage continued to persist significantly after the last dose of the drug had been taken.
- Demographic Summary: The study indicated that valvular abnormalities existed in 20% of women and 12% of men who were tested.

Response and Regulation

- After reports of valvular abnormalities emerged relating to use of fenfluramine, it was withdrawn from sale by Wyeth in the United States.[8]

7) Antibiotic Resistance

Antibiotic resistance is a significant public health crisis and modern "tragedy of the commons" killing around 700,000 people globally each year. The crisis is due to the way antibiotics work — killing susceptible bacteria, creating opportunity for resistant populations to grow, and now any person who takes antibiotics can be a carrier and spreader of resistant bacteria. As a result, all users contribute to diminishing the collective effectiveness of the shared drug supply. The international community has compounded the crisis further by having a "stagnant pipeline" of research, because of lack of adequate commercial incentive for the private sector to create new drugs that must be used infrequently to preserve their effectiveness. At either end of the spectrum, the ethical implications are the same: there is a duty to perform "easy rescues" for the sake of public good in terms of preserving effective use of antibiotics — healthy individuals should abstain from antibiotic usage for relatively minor self-limiting infections. Experts are recommending that the solution move toward economic mechanisms such as a "Pigovian tax" on human usage of antibiotics — this would require users to internalize the social costs of using the drug, reducing unnecessary utilization of antibiotics, while also generating much-needed revenue for pharmaceutical research and global conservation strategies such as improved sanitation and expanded usage of vaccines. Ultimately, the tragedy needs to be managed via a transition from voluntary restraint to structured regulatory oversight to protect these essential medical resources.[9]

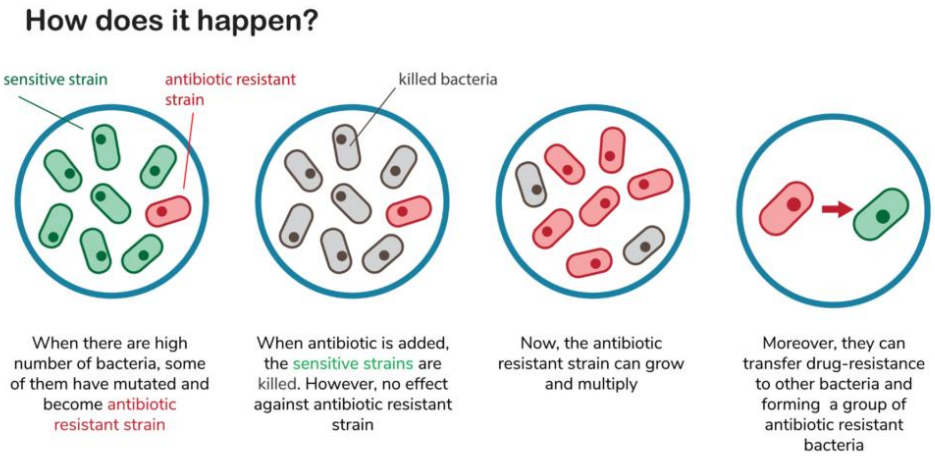

Fig: Antibiotic Resistance.

8) Vaccine Tragedies Due TO Resistance

Vaccine resistance or hesitancy is viewed as one of the top ten global health threats of today as it has led to the resurgence of diseases like measles, whooping cough, and diphtheria that were once under control. Vaccination programs contributed to the worldwide eradication of smallpox and have prevented more than 20 million deaths from measles since 2000; yet, many people today believe that these diseases are no longer relevant and have skepticism towards vaccines. The internet also creates problems by allowing for conceited information to spread much faster than accurate or true information which adds fuel to the fire for people who tend to already be anxious or worried about vaccines. Many historical controversies related to vaccines over the years have been provenscientifically invalid through several meta-analyses with an excess of 1.2 million participants that included the now-retracted study from 1998 claiming a link between the MMR vaccine and autism and fears related to the DTP vaccine. Natural measles infection will cause "immune amnesia" caused by natural measles infection which removes approximately 10 - 70 % of a patient's existing antibodies and creates a higher risk for unrelated infections in the future, while vaccination against measles will not create that same risk. Added to this situation, the decreasing faith and trust in government and pharmaceutical companies has also been on the increase; as illustrated by the Dengvaxia incident in the Philippines in which extra risks of being hospitalized after dengue vaccination were reported for

children who had been unexposed to the disease; this creates more worries when parents consider vaccinations for their children. Rebuilding trust will require that there be transparent, independent oversight of both the government and pharmaceutical companies, along with enhanced communications between healthcare providers and the consumers of vaccines to guarantee that consumer safety concerns are addressed and that freedom to choose remains.[10]

Fig: Anti-Vaccine Sentiment.

9) Impact of Veterinary Diclofenac on Vulture Populations

Diclofenac sodium was first used as a product for livestock back in the late 1970s but it wasn't until 2001 that serious evidence of its ecologically devastating effects became apparent. In fact, 95% to 99% percent of the vulture population throughout the Indian subcontinent had been wiped out prior to this point, primarily due to the veterinary application of diclofenac sodium. As vultures consume dead animals in the wild that have been treated with this particular drug, they experience acute toxicity similar to that of an individual who has ingested the drug. As a result of this higher level of toxicity, it causes the vulture to suffer from renal failure as well as visceral gout due to the excess buildup of uric acid throughout all internal organs. Some of the species that have suffered dramatic declines include the Asian white-rumped vulture and long-billed vulture, amongst others. The ban on the use of diclofenac sodium for animal treatment in India, Pakistan, and Nepal was an important step to taking corrective action because of the severe consequences experienced by vultures from use of this drug in livestock. Wildlife advocates are now working to promote the use of meloxicam; a less harmful alternative, in place of diclofenac sodium in order to return vultures to their ecological role as scavengers. The role of vultures in our ecosystems is incredibly important for human health through their ability to eliminate pathogens from the environment using their unique digestive systems helping to minimize the spread of disease including but not limited to anthrax, cholera, and rabies.[11]

10) The 2025 Coldrif Crisis: A Pediatric Drug Tragedy

In October 2025, a tragedy in India involving the cough syrup from Sresan Pharmaceuticals again demonstrated the ongoing liabilities of pediatric death caused by industrial toxins contained in the products changed the lives of countless families. In this case, the cough syrup was found to be manufactured with diethylene glycol (DEG)—a highly toxic chemical that can be made from industrially produced or synthetic materials—rather than with pharmaceutical-grade propylene glycol or glycerin and subsequently metabolized to create the metabolic toxin 2-hydroxyethyl thioester (HETA) following ingestion. Metabolic dysfunction related to the ingestion of DEG results in severe metabolic acidosis, acute kidney injury, multi-organ failure and death. Following a regulatory investigation to determine the cause of the outbreak, the specific batch of cough syrup associated with the contamination was identified and subsequently recalled, and the manufacturer's license was suspended until corrective actions could be taken. This particular incident is a clear example of vulnerabilities within the global pharmaceutical supply chain and highlights the critical need for pharmaceutical manufacturers to conduct comprehensive purity testing of all excipients prior to manufacture or distribution of excipient-containing products in order to prevent industrial-grade toxins from entering accessibly to active pharmaceutical ingredients used in the manufacture of pediatric medications.[12]

11) Other Tragedies

The following table summarizes the remaining drug tragedies and unethical clinical studies detailed in the provided research and historical reports.

Summary of Remaining Drug Tragedies

Drug/Tragedy	Category	Mechanism of Action (M.O.A.)	Disaster Details
Cerivastatin (Baycol)	Statin (Anti-hyperlipidemic)	HMG-CoA reductase inhibitor used to reduce cholesterol.	Linked to rhabdomyolysis, a rapid breakdown of skeletal muscle that causes kidney failure. 52 deaths were reported globally.
Troglitazone (Rezulin)	Thiazolidinedione (Anti-diabetic)	Activates peroxisome proliferator-activated receptors (PPARs) to reduce inflammation and blood sugar.	Withdrawn in 2000 due to severe liver injury and acute liver failure. 0.5% of patients experienced extreme enzyme elevations.

Nimesulide	NSAID (Selective COX-2 inhibitor)	Multifactorial action used for acute pain and primary dysmenorrhoea.	Banned for pediatric use in India in 2011 due to reports of liver failure and hepatotoxicity.
Accutane	Vitamin-A formulation	Used for the treatment of serious acne.	Accutane (isotretinoin) has the potential to cause liver injury or more commonly elevated liver enzymes; it is a high-dose derivative of vitamin A that the body processes through the liver. Isotretinoin can create a fatty buildup in the liver cells and may put added stress on the liver's metabolism, potentially leading to elevated enzyme levels in about 10-15% of people who use isotretinoin.
Tuskegee Syphilis Study	Unethical clinical study	Study of the progression of untreated syphilis in human subjects.	Conducted between 1932–1972; subjects were not informed about the nature of the study; proper treatment was withheld and more than 100 died as a result.
Nazi Experiments	Unethical human experimentation	Diverse brutal tests, including organ transplantation and immunity assessments.	Involved involuntary amputation, chronic dehydration from sea water experiments, and toxic injections into genital organs.

Cause of Drug Tragedies

The pharmaceutical industry has experienced a long and painful journey towards modern day drug development, a journey that spanned nearly seventy (70) years. While the body of knowledge is overwhelmingly positive and serves as a guiding light for current and future medications, there are some examples of drug disasters throughout history. These drug disasters exemplify how the drug is misrepresented or misinterpreted by those responsible for the approval of the drug, whether through faulty clinical trials or significant ethical violations.

1) Scientific and Preclinical Research Failures

- Typically, the lack of scientific and preclinical data is a common cause of drug tragedies. Many drugs proceeded to human trials in which there was no preclinical data regarding the safety or efficacy of the drug.
- Drug tragedies frequently occurred because the physiological reaction of an animal species is not always predictive of the same reaction in humans (e.g., Thalidomide).
- A lack of sound scientific rationale or clearly defined clinical research protocols often contributed to many of the early trials performed (e.g., Rezulin (Troglitazone)).

2) Ethical and Human Rights Violations

- Ethics were often disregarded during the "dark period" of clinical research (1930-1960), during which time many people participated in clinical trials without their knowledge or consent (Nazi experiments, Guatemalan Syphilis Study, etc.)
- Victims were never informed of their medical diagnosis; in addition to not receiving informed consent, victims of these studies never received any form of compensation or any account of what was done to them.

3) Lack of knowledge

- Technical incompetence, along with not having enough specialized knowledge (e.g., not having enough of a background in the area of expertise) contributed to trial designs being flawed and to the poor understanding of "complex" toxicology.

4) Professional negligence

- Oversight failures / the inability to recognize the existence of early negative signs prevented study participant safety from being protected in regards to hurriedly conducting studies.

5) Scientific dishonesty

- The secret manipulation of trial data and the censoring of negative trial results (publication bias) disguised the danger of trial participants and created inflated safety profiles for trial programs.

Impact Of Drug Tragedies

There is a long-standing history behind how clinical research has developed over the last century. This story relates to how molecules have progressed through laboratories until they eventually reached commercialization, and it has been heavily influenced by a pervasive lack of accountability due to a long history of drug-related tragedies resulting in both adverse health effects causing mortality, morbidity and great suffering.

The effect of drug-related tragedies can be primarily understood by examining three separate areas of impact: (1) human consequences; (2) regulatory changes; and (3) bioethics as a field.

1. Human/Social Impact

The human toll of drug-related catastrophes can best be summed up in two ways: physically and psychologically.

- **Physical and Psychological Effects of Drug-related Tragedies**: Drug-related disasters resulted in enormous physical and psychological harm to human subjects. For instance, the Thalidomide disaster caused approximately 2000 deaths, as well as over 10,000 cases of morbidity (very severe and severe birth defects, including phocomelia).
- **Exploitation of Human Subjects**: During the early decades (1930-1960) there were instances when human subjects were victimized as experimental subjects ("guinea pigs"). There are examples of many unethical actions occurring in these studies, including: 1) forced participation; and 2) extremely violent torture of subjects (e.g., the Nazis freezing, sterilizing and infecting subjects).
- **Systemic Inequality of Treatment Between Groups of People**: The Tuskegee Syphilis Study (1932-1972) was one example of how systemic inequality occurred when disadvantaged ethnic/racial populations were treated differently than the rest of the population by being denied all known treatments (e.g., penicillin) to support the study of an ongoing disease for 40 years.

2. Regulatory Evolution and Landmarks

Every major tragedy in pharmaceutical history acted as a catalyst for a new regulatory landmark, transforming the FDA and other global authorities from reactive bodies into proactive guardians of public safety.

Tragedy	Year	Resulting Regulatory Impact
Sulfanilamide Disaster	1937	Led to the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act of 1938, making pre-marketing safety data mandatory.
Nazi's Experiments	1940s	Resulted in the Nuremberg Code (1947), which established ethical guidelines for research on humans.
Thalidomide Tragedy	1957–61	Prompted the Kefauver-Harris Amendment (1962), requiring proof of both safety and efficacy before drug approval.
Tuskegee Syphilis Study	1932–72	Led to the National Research Act (1974) and the influential Belmont Report (1979).

3. Impact on Clinical Science and Ethic

The impact of drug tragedies on how clinical trials are developed with scientific methodology and evidence-based approaches has had a transformative effect on the drug industry with regard to ethics and clinical science.

Ethics have also been institutionalized through several changes in regulations regarding human subject research. For instance, as outlined in the Nuremberg Code and updated in the Helsinki Declaration, human subjects in a clinical trial are required to give informed consent prior to entering that trial. In addition, modern drug trials are now conducted in a structured phase approach from phase I (safety) to phase IV (post-marketing) before a drug will be introduced to the public. The current regulatory system will also place the rights, safety and welfare of a human subject who participates in a clinical trial above any potential benefit of the study.

The same can be said with regard to the improvements in scientific methodology of pharmacovigilance that have taken place following the tragedies caused by drugs such as Vioxx and Baycol, both of which revealed a need for a greater effort to monitor the adverse effects of drugs after they have been approved for use in the market. For instance, data from both Vioxx and Baycol have led to the development of many risk management programs such as iPLEDGE for Isotretinoin and the Thalomid REMS (formerly known as the S.T.E.P.S.) program that was developed for the restricted use of Thalidomide.

The first phase of clinical trials marks a new age in drug development and will pave the way for advances in drug research and the science behind it.

Drug Regulation and Safety Measures

The Regulation of Modern Drug Products revolves around Science- and Evidence-Based Systems which are designed to prevent pharmaceutical disasters through by ensuring all medications provided to people are alike in general terms, by meeting three essential standards of Quality, Safety and Efficacy. Although early standards were primarily geared toward establishing uniformity in the way pharmaceutical products were prepared, historical drug-related tragedies such as the deaths from Sulfanilamide and the birth defects from Thalidomide provided the driving force for the creation of the highly regulated legal environments that govern Drug Manufacturing Today.

1) The Regulatory Environment

All Governments set forth their own National Regulatory Authority's (NRA's) in order to provide protection to their Nations and Citizens from products that are either not effective or are harmful. For example, the following are examples of changes in law that occurred as a direct result of drug-related tragedies:

- The Federal Food, Drug & Cosmetic Act of 1938; established Pre-Market Safety Notification.
- The Drug Amendments Act of 1962; established that any New Drug required proof before approval that it was both Safe and Effective.
- EEC Directive 65/65/EEC; Harmonized Drug Laws throughout Europe providing for a uniform means to ensure Safety Oversight.
- In India the comprehensive mandate requiring

clinical trial data for new drug approval was introduced through amendments in the late 1980s and reinforced in 1988, The system was further modernized with the New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2019.

2) Core Safety Functions

In order for Regulatory Authorities to remain Effective in the role of protecting their Nations from Dangerous Drug Products they perform a number of Cooperative Activities which are all essential to their ability to provide Consumers with Safe Products:

- Licensing; All Drug Manufacturing, Importing, Exporting and Distributing Facilities must have a license, and operate in Compliance with Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) in order to provide consistency.
- Marketing Authorization; Regulators will analyze Technical Data; Including Common Technical Document (CTD), to determine the Risk vs. Benefit of the Drug Product, in order to determine their ability to approve the drug product for marketing.
- Post-Marketing Surveillance; Regulators will monitor the drug product Safety in the Public, and Collect and Assess Data Regarding Adverse Drug Reactions.
- Promotional/Marketing Authorization; Regulators will ensure that any Promotions/Marketing for a particular Drug Product will be done in accordance with that Product's Marketing Authorization (i.e., whether the Product is Through Alternative Market - USA National Marketing Authorization; or World Wide Region Market Authorization).

Modern Approaches to Prevent Drug Tragedies

Adolescent overdoses, many contemporary solutions exist to facilitate an integrative approach comprised of education, clinical treatment, and legislative compliance.

1) Education & Prevention

•Schools/Programs: Programs like DARE are designed to support and teach adolescents refusal skills and educate about the dangers associated with drug use.

•Community Awareness: Programs designed to engage parents and community leaders to identify early indicators of drug abuse will help to raise awareness and create a safer, reduced stigma environment for addiction treatment.

2) Clinical & Support Services

•Integrated Treatment: Such treatment for effective recovery would use both medication-assisted treatment (MAT) to help eliminate cravings and incorporate behavioral therapy to help address the reasons leading to their drug use.

•Mental Health Services: Mental health services such as counseling for individuals with depression, anxiety, and trauma are critical in order to improve their mental health and as a result; less likely to self-medicate.

3) Regulation & Harm Reduction

•Tracking & Limits: Prescription drug monitoring programs (PDMPs) allow for the identification of prescription abuse; therefore, severely limit the amount of high-risk prescription opoids that are available through a prescriber.

•Emergency Intervention: Global distribution of naloxone (overdose reversal medication) and utilization of safe injection sites will play a vital role in avoiding immediate deaths from overdose.

4) Primary Obstacles

- Access Sites: There are often significant access problems for mental health and substance abuse facilities in rural and underserved communities.
- Synthetic Drugs: Highly potent synthetic drugs (e.g., designer drugs) continue to flood the United States at an alarming rate, thereby making any other form of prevention ineffective on a macro level.

CONCLUSION

Recently, the management of drug tragedies in humans has become one of the greatest therapeutic challenges that face us globally. Now, critically reviewed the evidence from previous drug disasters, including the impact of diethylstilbestrol (DES) on successive generations and the cardiovascular risks associated with rofecoxib, which have affected patients around the globe. The conclusion of our review is that while there has been significant advancement in clinical research over time, there continues to be a significant need for rigorous oversight in order to prevent predictable and preventable tragedies.

From the review of various cases it has been observed that nearly all of the cases were a result of either incomplete or inadequate clinical studies for assessing the safety of the active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) and the excipients, or inadequately conducted post-marketing surveillance for the specific product. The sulfanilamide tragedy of 1937, also known as "the taste of death", is a chilling reminder that "inactive" solvents can be as lethal as the drug itself when testing for safety has been neglected. These historical failures reinforce the idea that a drug is not simply a single molecule, but rather a complex combination of multiple ingredients that must be evaluated in their entirety for toxicity.

In my opinion, from the study of many drug tragedies, it may be concluded that, in the future the provision of new drugs and clinical trials rules are required to be strictly followed to avoid health hazards and tragedies.

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