

## Talking Biotech: Thalidomide once caused birth defects—now it treats cancer

The drug thalidomide was developed with tremendous promise in managing a variety of disorders, such as anxiety and morning sickness. However, a few years after its common use, it became linked to a suite of birth defects, primarily defects in limb development. For almost sixty years scientists have tried to unravel the molecular basis of its action.

Dr. Katherine Donovan, a postdoctoral researcher at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute at Harvard University, was the primary author on recent work that describes the molecular basis of thalidomide-based disorders. Ironically, understanding its roles in developmental disorders also illuminates possible roles in disease treatment, as it is used in treatment of some cancers and may find wider application in the future.

Dr. Katherine Donovan's website  
Follow her on Twitter [@kdonovan1008](#)

<https://geneticliteracyproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/153-Donovan.mp3>

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