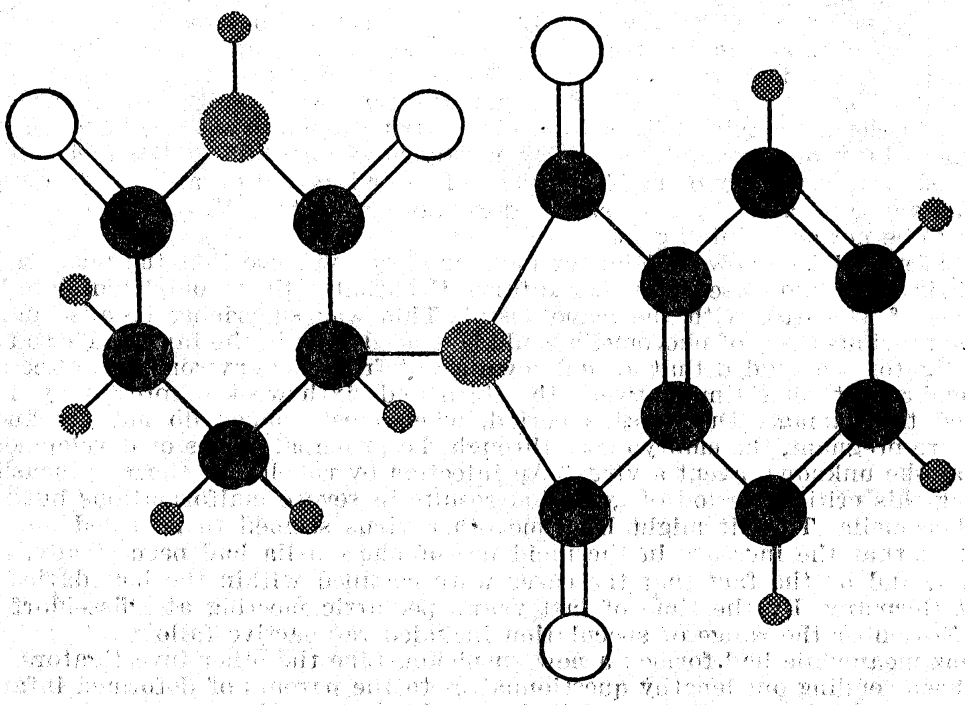
Since the structure of the molecule suggested that it should work as a sedative, Grünenthal tried it as an anticonvulsant for epileptics. It did not prevent convulsions, but it worked as a hypnotic, acting promptly to give a deep, "natural" all-night sleep without a hangover. Given the trade name Contergan, it became during 1960 the favorite sleeping table of West Germany, inexpensively available without a prescription and widely used in homes, hospitals and mental institutions. It turned out to be as safe for humans as for animals. Would-be suicides who tried it after it came on the market survived large doses of it without harm.

Grünenthal combined thalidomide with aspirin and other medicines. Germans consumed these compounds—Algosediv, Peracon Expectorans, Grippex and Polygrippan—for such conditions as colds, coughs, grippe, nervousness, neuralgia, migraine and other headaches and asthma. A liquid form made especially for children became West Germany's baby sitter. Hospitals employed it to quiet children for electroencephalographic studies. As an antiemetic, it helped to combat the nausea of pregnancy, and of course Contergan gave many a pregnant woman a good night's sleep. Grünenthal was manufacturing it almost by the ton.

Soon pharmaceutical companies in other countries began to make or market thalidomide under license from Grünenthal Distillers (Biochemicals) Ltd. sold it as Distaval in the British Isles, Australia and New Zealand. Combinations received the trade names of Valgis, Tensival (a tranquilizer), Valgraine and Asmaval. An advertisement in Great Britain emphasized the safety of the drug with a picture of a small child taking a bottle from a medicine shelf. From Portugal it went into local and international channels of distribution as Softenon. In Canada Frank W. Horner Ltd. of Montreal marketed it as Talimol and the



THALIDOMIDE is a synthetic drug. In this diagram of its molecule, carbon atoms are represented by black balls, hydrogen by small gray balls, oxygen by white balls and the two nitrogen atoms by large gray balls.