

Improvement of Public Health and Pharmaceutical Industry after World War II

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Key Words: *public health, pharmaceutical industry, Kowa, spinning capital, Army of health hygiene products depot,*

1. Background and aim

Preventing infectious diseases and protecting health is essential to human welfare and sustained economic and social development. In low-income countries more than a third of all deaths are among children under 15, and people predominantly die of infectious diseases. In Japan after World War II, these were also major social challenges. The thing that had a big role in addressing these challenges was the rapid recovery of the pharmaceutical industry. In earlier studies, the reasons of the rapid recovery of the pharmaceutical industry were financial help from the Japanese government and the entry of chemical companies into the pharmaceutical industry that began to produce antibiotic drugs. But these reasons are external factors, and earlier studies lack the analysis from the viewpoint of internal factors. Therefore in this study, the recovery process of the pharmaceutical industry after World War II is analyzed from the perspectives of the company's internal factors.

2. Methodology

This study focuses on Kowa Company. Kowa was a spinning company before World War II. Just after World War II, Kowa entered into the pharmaceutical industry. So the growth process of Kowa's medical products businesses from 1945 to 1960 is analyzed in order to clarify the relationship between the internal factors and the recovery process of the pharmaceutical industry. Historical sources of this study are "The one-hundred-years' history of Kowa" and "Historical sources of the one-hundred-years' history of Kowa".

3. Growth process of Kowa's medical products businesses

Kowa entered into the pharmaceutical industry by getting engineers who used to work at the army of hygiene product depot. Firstly, Kowa produced the Japanese Pharmacopoeia's medicines. But these were not much sold because Kowa was little known as a medical products company. So Kowa produced "Sumenin-tyu-Kowa" by building upon one of the research projects during the time of the army of hygiene product depot. By this new medicine Kowa got a toehold in the market for a drug in Japan. Then Kowa produced hot seller medicines by collaborating closely with engineers at the army of hygiene product depot and the School of Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of Tokyo.

Kowa Spinning Company helped Kowa while Kowa's medical products businesses could not generate enough return at first. The main business of Kowa was the trading of cotton products, but they did not have enough work because of lack of cotton products. So Kowa Spinning sold cotton products to Kowa. As a result, Kowa got products for trading and generated revenue. And this revenue helped Kowa's medical products businesses to grow.

4. Conclusion

There are two internal factors that played an important role in the growth process of Kowa's medical products businesses. First, skilled engineers had been "passed on" from the prewar period to the postwar period. Technologies engineers had generated many new medicines at Kowa. Second, Kowa Spinning had accumulated capital before and during the war. Kowa Spinning increased spinning machineries and produced a lot of cotton products by this capital. Kowa got these products and money for medical products businesses. First factor means that pharmaceutical technologies had been "passed on" from the prewar period to the postwar period. Second factor means capital transfer among a business group. Technologies that had been "passed on" from the prewar period to the postwar period and capital transfer among a business group are also factors that enable the pharmaceutical industry to recover rapidly after World War II. Owing to these two internal factors, Kowa's medical products businesses and the pharmaceutical industry could grow and contribute to the improvement of public health.