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# Allergan Inc

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## Introduction

In the annals of American business, few stories capture the spirit of innovation, resilience, and transformation quite like that of Allergan Inc. Since its modest beginnings above a Los Angeles drugstore in the late 1940s, Allergan's evolution into a global pharmaceutical powerhouse is a testament to American entrepreneurialism and adaptability. This book narrates the remarkable journey of Allergan—from its roots in eye care to its rise as a leader in medical aesthetics, neurosciences, and beyond, ultimately culminating in its acquisition by AbbVie in 2020.

Allergan's inception was driven by founder Gavin S. Herbert's vision to pioneer specialized products that improved patient lives. The company's early focus on ophthalmic solutions laid the foundation for rapid growth, fueled by an unwavering dedication to product quality and research. Innovations like the first cortisone eye drop, and breakthroughs in contact lens care, made Allergan a trusted name in the medical community and propelled it swiftly from a local operation to a national and then international business. These formative years reflect a blend of shrewd strategy, scientific curiosity, and the dynamic energy of postwar America.

The decades that followed saw Allergan constantly reinventing itself in response to shifting markets and medical advancements. From the boom in eye care to a bold diversification into skincare and neurosciences, the company's trajectory was shaped by both organic innovation and strategic acquisitions. None of Allergan's achievements would prove as transformative as the introduction of Botox, which emerged from a treatment for eye muscle disorders to become a household name, revolutionizing both medical and aesthetic practices worldwide. This pivot signaled Allergan's ability to leverage science, marketing, and foresight to shape cultural and medical paradigms.

Allergan's story is not only one of scientific and commercial triumphs but also of complex challenges and contentious episodes. Over its history, the company was tested by legal battles, regulatory scrutiny, and ethical debates, ranging from issues of product safety to high-profile controversies surrounding patent protections and marketing practices. These events highlight the broader tensions within the pharmaceutical industry—innovation versus regulation, profit versus patient welfare, and global expansion versus local accountability.

At the heart of Allergan's journey lies a robust culture of leadership and corporate citizenship. The company's progress was steered by visionaries, executives, and employees dedicated to pushing the frontiers of medicine, while also advancing corporate social responsibility and philanthropy. Whether through sustainable

operations, contributions to public health, or their role in the United Nations Global Compact, Allergan strove to balance enterprise with ethics, shaping the global landscape well beyond the boardroom.

As Allergan entered the third decade of the twenty-first century, its acquisition by AbbVie signaled both an end and a beginning—the culmination of seventy years of independent growth and the launchpad for new opportunities within a larger pharmaceutical conglomerate. This book examines Allergan’s past in detail and reflects on its ongoing legacy: the innovations, the controversies, the leadership lessons, and the enduring impact of an iconic American company.

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## CHAPTER ONE: The Origins of Allergan: A California Story

The story of Allergan, Inc. begins not in a gleaming corporate campus, but in a small, unassuming laboratory situated above a drugstore in bustling Los Angeles, California. This was 1948, a time when America was emerging from the shadows of World War II, brimming with optimism and an eagerness for innovation. It was in this fertile ground that Gavin S. Herbert, a pharmacist with an entrepreneurial spirit and a keen eye for unmet medical needs, planted the seeds of what would become a global pharmaceutical giant.

Herbert's initial vision was rooted in the burgeoning field of eye care, an area where specialized solutions were sorely lacking. Back then, many ophthalmic preparations were concocted in local pharmacies, often lacking the rigorous sterility and consistency that modern medicine demands. Herbert, recognizing this critical gap, set out to create higher-quality, more reliable products. It was a humble beginning, but one characterized by a dedication to scientific rigor and a pharmacist's understanding of patient needs.

His early efforts, alongside chemist Stanley Bly, led to the development of Allergan's first product. Interestingly, this initial formulation was an antihistamine, first introduced as a nasal spray. However, it wasn't long before Herbert and Bly adapted their discovery, and by 1953, the antihistamine made its debut as an eye drop. This adaptability, a willingness to pivot and refine, would become a hallmark of Allergan's trajectory. The transition from nasal spray to eye drop underscored a pragmatic approach to product development, one that sought to maximize the utility of their scientific discoveries.

The early years saw Allergan quickly make a name for itself with a series of innovative ophthalmic products. Among these were Cortefrin, notable as the first cortisone eye drop, and Prednefrin, an ophthalmic steroid decongestant. These weren't just incremental improvements; they represented genuine advancements in treating common eye conditions, offering physicians and patients more effective tools than previously available. Each new product built upon the company's growing reputation for quality and efficacy.

A significant turning point in Allergan's nascent history arrived with a regulatory decree from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The FDA mandated that all ophthalmic preparations had to be sterile. While seemingly a logistical hurdle, this regulation proved to be a powerful catalyst for Allergan's growth. It effectively weeded

out the smaller, less equipped drugstore formulations, favoring companies like Allergan that possessed the capabilities for large-scale sterile production. This regulatory shift, rather than hindering, served to accelerate Allergan's ascent, underscoring the importance of compliance and advanced manufacturing in the pharmaceutical industry.

By 1957, the fruits of Herbert's labor and the impact of the FDA's ruling were evident: Allergan's sales had reached a respectable \$100,000. This milestone, modest by later standards but significant for a young company, necessitated a move to a larger facility, still within Los Angeles. It was around this time that Jack Browning joined the team, bringing with him marketing expertise that would prove invaluable. With Browning's assistance, Allergan launched its first national marketing plan, expanding its reach beyond its initial regional strongholds. This strategic move from localized distribution to a national presence marked a significant step in Allergan's evolution from a small lab operation to a burgeoning pharmaceutical enterprise.

The strategic investments in marketing and increased production capacity quickly paid dividends. By 1960, Allergan had officially crossed the million-dollar threshold in sales, a testament to its burgeoning success and the growing demand for its specialized eye care products. This impressive growth prompted another relocation, this time to Santa Ana, California. This move symbolized Allergan's transition from its humble Los Angeles beginnings to a more established corporate presence, laying the groundwork for the expansive growth that would define the decades to come. The initial vision of a pharmacist in a small lab had, in just over a decade, blossomed into a company with national recognition and significant potential.

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