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Bard (C.R.) Inc.

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Introduction

Few American companies have left as indelible a mark on modern medicine as C.R. Bard, Inc. Born from the vision and entrepreneurial drive of Charles Russell Bard in 1907, this company transformed from a small importer of medical devices to an international powerhouse in medical technology. The journey of Bard is one filled with invention, adaptation, controversy, growth, and ultimately, integration into a larger global entity. Its history mirrors many of the technological, regulatory, and ethical challenges that have shaped the American medical device industry over the past century.

In its earliest days, C.R. Bard tapped into the unmet medical needs of the early twentieth century, importing and distributing innovative products to physicians and hospitals throughout the United States. The company's initial successes were built on forging strong partnerships and responding nimbly to the challenges of its time, such as wartime shortages and rapid advancements in medical science. With each passing decade, Bard distinguished itself as a company willing to invest in research, manufacturing, and safety, always striving to place patient welfare and medical progress at the forefront.

Bard's evolution was not just about growth and profitability; it was equally about pioneering new frontiers in healthcare technology. From the introduction of the Foley catheter to innovations in vascular access, oncology, and surgical techniques, Bard consistently brought transformative solutions to market. Its product portfolio expanded in tandem with medical science itself, impacting the lives of millions of patients worldwide. Strategic acquisitions and international partnerships became key drivers of the company's expansion and its adaptability amid shifting clinical needs and regulatory environments.

However, Bard's journey has been challenging and at times, fraught with controversy. Like many leading companies in complex and highly regulated industries, Bard faced significant legal, ethical, and regulatory hurdles. Lawsuits concerning product safety, questions of corporate responsibility, and compliance with evolving healthcare laws tested the company's resilience and capacity for reform. These episodes serve as important lessons on the risks and responsibilities inherent in the medical device sector.

In 2017, C.R. Bard began a new chapter when it was acquired by Becton, Dickinson and Company (BD), a global healthcare leader. This union not only underscored the value of Bard's expertise and innovation but also highlighted the growing trend of consolidation within the healthcare industry. As a subsidiary of BD, Bard remains a

crucial force in medical technology, even as its name recedes from the corporate spotlight.

This book explores the unique narrative of Bard (C.R.) Inc., tracing its origins, its triumphs and tribulations, its products and people, and its role in shaping both the American and global medical landscapes. By examining Bard's remarkable history, current situation, and future prospects, we gain not just a portrait of one company, but a deeper understanding of the evolution of medical technology, corporate strategy, and healthcare delivery in America and beyond.

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CHAPTER ONE: The Origins of C.R. Bard: Charles Russell Bard's Vision

The story of C.R. Bard, Inc. begins not in a gleaming laboratory or a bustling hospital, but with a man named Charles Russell Bard, an American importer who initially specialized in French silks. Born in 1871, Charles Russell Bard had an eye for opportunity and a knack for making connections, which would ultimately lead him down an unexpected path into the nascent medical device industry.

In 1907, a pivotal year for Bard, he leveraged his existing European network to introduce a novel product to the American market: a urethral catheter from a French firm, J. Eynard. This marked his official foray into medical products, a venture that would, over a century, evolve into a global enterprise. Beyond catheters, Bard also began distributing "Gomenol," a European remedy for urinary discomfort. This early product, derived from niaouli oil, was touted for its antiseptic and decongestant properties, suggesting Bard's initial interest lay in urological and related ailments.

Bard's early business model was largely focused on distribution rather than manufacturing. He acted as a vital bridge, bringing European medical innovations to American practitioners who were eager for advanced tools and treatments. This keen understanding of market needs and access to international suppliers would be a recurring theme throughout the company's formative years. The very act of importing these specialized instruments, such as the J. Eynard catheters, highlighted a growing demand for sophisticated medical devices in the United States, a demand that Charles Russell Bard was uniquely positioned to meet.

The entrepreneurial spirit of Charles Russell Bard was further evident in 1915 when he embarked on another significant partnership, this time with Morgan Parker. Parker, an inventor, had developed a new type of scalpel, and together they formed Bard-Parker Co. Inc. Charles Russell Bard provided the initial office space and a modest investment of \$500, while Parker brought his patented invention to the table. This collaboration proved particularly fortuitous with the advent of World War I, which severely disrupted the supply of imported scalpels, making their American-made alternative highly sought after.

The Bard-Parker partnership, while successful in its time, was not destined to be a permanent union. Disagreements over manufacturing processes and business direction eventually arose between Charles Russell Bard and Morgan Parker. By 1923, their divergent visions led to Bard selling his interest in Bard-Parker to Parker. This amicable separation allowed Charles Russell Bard to refocus his energies on his core

passion: the distribution of urological devices. Bard-Parker, incidentally, would go on to become a division of Becton, Dickinson and Company, the very entity that would eventually acquire C.R. Bard decades later, creating an interesting historical full circle.

Following the divestment of his share in Bard-Parker, Charles Russell Bard formally incorporated his business as C.R. Bard, Inc. in 1923. The newly incorporated entity continued its dedicated focus on importing and distributing Eynard catheters and a variety of other urological instruments. This period solidified the company's commitment to the urology field, a specialization that would remain a cornerstone of Bard's identity for many decades to come. The emphasis on urological products reflected a targeted approach, concentrating on an area with clear and consistent medical demand.

However, by 1926, Charles Russell Bard's health began to decline. Recognizing the need for continuity and a strong future for the company he had painstakingly built, he made a pivotal decision. He sold C.R. Bard, Inc. to two of his trusted employees: John Frederick Willits, his capable sales manager, and Edson L. Outwin, his astute accountant. The price tag for this burgeoning medical supply company was a modest \$18,000. This transaction marked the end of the Charles Russell Bard era and the beginning of a new chapter for C.R. Bard, Inc., setting the stage for significant growth and innovation under fresh leadership. Charles Russell Bard passed away in 1934.

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