Tung-Mao Su – Chairman, Taiwan Pharmaceutical Manufacturer’s Association (TPMA)



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Tung-Mao Su, chairman of TPMA, highlights the association’s historic significance in cultivating Taiwan’s pharmaceutical industry, its members’ most pressing concerns, and outlines the developments of the company which he leads as president, Chi Sheng Pharma & Biotech.

Please begin by introducing the history of the Taiwan Pharmaceutical Manufacturer’s Association.

In the early recovery of Taiwan after the Japanese occupation, there was a need for medical products resulting in the establishment of pharmaceutical manufacturers. At that time there were only a few pharmaceutical manufacturers. For the mutual benefits of pharmaceutical manufacturers, an idea to establish a manufacturer’s association was conceived. Therefore, the original Taiwan Pharmaceutical Manufacturer’s Association was established in 1948.

In 2012, the 27th First Member Representing Meeting was held to pass the proposal for changing the name of the Association to “TPMA”, which along with the use of the official seal, was approved by the Ministry of the Interior. During the election of the 29th Board of Directors and Supervisors meeting in April 2017, I was elected to serve as chairman of the TPMA.

How is the TPMA positioned today, over 70 years after its foundation?

In 1948, there were 24 pharmaceutical manufacturers in Taiwan; those manufacturers officially initiated this organization. As of December 2018, the TPMA has 233 members – including 193 regular members and 40 sponsors. These members consist of 121 western medicine manufacturers, 53 traditional Chinese medicine manufacturers, and 19 active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) manufacturers. Geographically, 114 of our members are located in the north of Taiwan, 29 in central Taiwan, and 70 in the south. The change in membership reflects the evolution of Taiwan's pharmaceutical industry from growth, to reform, and finally transformation.

You are also president of one of the TPMA's member companies. Can you introduce the organization as well?

Founded in 1962, Chi Sheng Pharma & Biotech is principally engaged in the manufacture and distribution of medical medicines and equipment. The Company provides injections, including hemodialysis solutions, amino acid injections and vitamin injections; oral solutions, such as antibiotics, cough syrups and stomach medicines; externally applied medicines, including contact lens solutions, salt solutions and iodine solutions, as well as consumptive products such as healthcare foods. The Company distributes its products in the domestic market and to overseas markets including China and Southeast Asia. I was elected as president by the Board of Directors in 2002.

How is the TPMA structured to best serve its members?

In order to solve key issues and facilitate industrial upgrading, TPMA has eight functional committees under the Board of Directors and Supervisors. These groups consist of the western medicine development committee, Chinese medicine development, API development, OTC development, compliance and technology, environmental protection and occupational safety and health, public affairs, and finally the international affairs committee.

What are the priorities and key mission of the TPMA?

The TPMA has been continuously coaching members to improve independent innovation capabilities and to establish core competitive advantages through enhanced technology,

equipment, and quality so that Taiwan's medicines are fully in line with international standards. TPMA has also led members to exhibit abroad, explore the international market, and master the dynamics of the international pharmaceutical industry in hopes of realizing the globalization of more Taiwanese pharmaceutical manufacturers.

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Owing to the scale, we in the pharmaceutical industry have to appropriately integrate that which could bring down investment costs, enhance connections among manufacturers and increase market competitiveness, so that we are better able to make Taiwan's pharmaceutical industry the next trillion-dollar [TWD] industry.

In your view, what role does traditional pharma play in Taiwan's healthcare and economic growth compared to the rising number of biopharmaceutical and biotech companies?

Compared to biotechnology companies, the strength of Taiwan's traditional manufacturers is that we already have an established manufacturing infrastructure. In this regard, we are able to cooperate with the emerging players as we are well experienced in forming licensing agreements and also offering CDMO services. However, it is unfortunate to see that under the government's 5+2 policy, a high priority is placed on the biotechnology and startup companies while traditional pharmaceutical players seem to be forgotten despite the clear contribution we are making to Taiwan's economic welfare. A vast majority of Taiwan's biotechs are still in the development phase without any revenues, yet the value that TPMA members bring to Taiwan's biomedical industry is overlooked. In the future, we hope to engage in more discussions with both the government and the biotech sector on how a more realistic balance can be struck between the role that the two sides will play in Taiwan's economic transformation.

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