Astellas Pharma Inc was formed on 1st April 2005 from the merger of Yamanouchi and Fujisawa. The aim of Astellas is to secure a top share in the Japanese pharmaceutical market; the combined company now has 5,000 medical representatives, the largest among domestic pharmaceutical companies, and it aims to develop an even stronger sales and marketing infrastructure. The company also expects to be able to provide broad coverage for both primary care physicians and specialty markets in the US by leveraging the existing infrastructures to accelerate expansion of the US business.

The merger of Yamanouchi and Fujisawa brought together two very complementary R&D pipelines, putting Astellas in a very strong position in the domestic Japanese market. The combined company has concentrated its core business on pharmaceuticals and related products, split into six key franchise fields and priority research areas; urology, inflammation, diabetes, infectious diseases, gastrointestinal disease and the central nervous system.

Astellas has a number of licensed-in products, which have been proven overseas by partner companies. These products, such as Micardis, Luvox, Seroquel, Eligard and Myslee, are regarded as "Synergy Products" by Astellas and should provide the foundation for future growth. Astellas is throwing its weight behind these products with support from all of its medical sales representatives and Area Marketing Supporters. For other key products Astellas has divided up its sales force into two: GA, which markets Yamanouchi products and CF, which markets the former Fujisawa products.

The merger also enhanced the global reach of Astellas and it now has a strong base from which to begin to increase overseas sales without relying too heavily on partners to market its products. Most Japanese pharmaceutical companies are still struggling to achieve this aim, despite setting up overseas subsidiaries and sales offices. Astellas now has a significant global sales network that spans Japan, Europe and North America, and it can finally begin to make inroads in foreign markets through its own sales channels.

Although recent years have seen declining sales in a number of its older products, Astellas' broad portfolio has enabled the accelerated transition of its late-stage products to regulatory submission in time to offset these declines. The greatest challenge for the company is expected to arise in fiscal 2009, when the US patent expiry in April 2008 of its blockbuster product Prograf is predicted to severely impact total company revenue. Losses incurred by the loss of exclusivity for this product are expected to be partially buffered by increasing sales of Vesiccare and mainstay products such as Micardis.

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