

Production of Hoffmann-La Roche (Roche) Branded Medicines *Sirolin* and *Tonikum* in Latvia 1927–1940

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Introduction. Hoffmann-La Roche established its foreign branch in Rīga to sell their own products in the Baltic States and with expectations to reestablish the business connection with Soviet Russia which they had over the period of 1896–1919, when they were conducting a successful business in Imperial Russia. Their products *Sirolin* and *Tonikum* were especially successful in the market of Russia. To continue this success story they started with the production of these products in Rīga. It took some time and effort for employees from Roche Rīga affiliate to introduce these products to potential customers – physicians, pharmacists and patients.

Aim. The aim of the respective study is to examine:

- the Russian market for pharmaceutical products before October 1917;
- the development of the pharmaceutical market in Latvia from 1918 to 1940 and the impact of Roche on the market;
- the production of *Sirolin* and *Tonikum* by Hoffmann-La Roche in Rīga.

Material and methods. Historically descriptive method has been used in the research. The sources of the study include historical correspondences and contracts between the company Roche headquarter in Basel (Switzerland) and its Sankt-Petersburg and later, Rīga branches that have been acquired from the Russian Historical Archives in Sankt-Petersburg, Roche historical collection and the archive in Basel, as well as the Latvian state historical archive and others.

Results and conclusions. At the beginning due to the problems of introducing new, foreign pharmaceutical products in the Latvian market, as well as problems to convince Latvian doctors about the effectiveness of these products, it was rather difficult to launch the company branch of the Hoffmann-La Roche in the Baltic States. In 1927/1928 with the permission of the headquarters in Basel, Roche started the production of *Tonikum* and *Sirolin* in Rīga. Prior to that there were long discussions about where to do it and who would be trusted this task.

The high prices of the branded medicine *Sirolin* played its role so that the doctors and the pharmacists would not prescribe these drugs because the patients could not afford them. Not even the marketing efforts and the recommendations towards better pricing politics from the company Hoffmann-La Roche could help this fact.

However, since 1930 the *Tonikum* is one of the best sellers of the pharmaceutical products of Roche in Latvia. This led to the production of imitation-drugs similar to *Tonikum* for example by “Farmakon”, a local wholesaler that made it cheaper than the original product and as a result it was prescribed more frequently. Nevertheless, due to good marketing and efforts of the employees of Hoffmann-La Roche in Latvia, *Tonikum* became one of the most profitable products for Roche in Latvia.

The production of *Sirolin* and *Tonikum*, which was a more advanced method contrary to the previously used method of reselling the mother company branded medicines, fixed the position of Hofmann-La Roche in the Latvian market and enforced their success. The production was closed in 1940 due to the nationalization of the Hofmann-La Roche in Rīga.