

Innovation History

Olympus was born in 1919 with the purpose of manufacturing microscopes domestically. The Company succeeded in developing the world's first practical gastrocamera roughly 30 years later. From the delivery of its first product up until today, Olympus has continued to be driven by its corporate DNA to create new value for society.

Evolution of Medical Business

Medical Equipment

Development of World's First Practical Gastrocamera

Olympus succeeded in creating a gastrocamera through joint development between the Company's R&D team and a physician in the Department of Gastroenterology of the University of Tokyo. The introduction of fiberscopes made it possible to see directly inside a patient's stomach in real time.

Entry into Surgical Device Business

Predicting that endoscopes would eventually be used in surgery, Olympus acquired German rigid endoscope manufacturer Winter & Ibe GmbH in 1979 and expanded its business into the surgical endoscope field.

Gastrointestinal Endoscopes



1950
Developed world's first practical gastrocamera



1964
Introduced GTF fiber gastroscope



1966
Launched Olympus' first biopsy scope and endotherapy devices (biopsy forceps and cytology brushes)



1982
Launched GF-UM1 / EU-M1, world's first ultrasonic endoscopy system



1985
Introduced EVIS-1 endoscopic video system

Surgical Devices



2002
Launched VISERA integrated video system and SonoSurg ultrasonic surgical system

1975
Entered medical surgical endoscopy field

2006
Launched VISERA Pro, integrated surgical video endoscope system

Scientific Solutions and Imaging Products



1920
Introduced Asahi 600x microscope



1936
Introduced Olympus' first camera, the Semi-Olympus I, marking entry into camera business



1963
Launched the Olympus Pen F, the world's first half-size SLR camera



1968
Launched Company's first industrial-use fiberscope, marking entry into industrial endoscope field



2006
Introduced OmniScan IX non-destructive testing system

From the Founding of Olympus and the Path to Business Modernization

1919–1950s

- 1919** Established as Takachiho Seisakusho to manufacture microscopes in Japan
- 1921** Registered trademark as Olympus
- 1949** Name changed to Olympus Optical Co., Ltd. Company listed on Tokyo Stock Exchange (TSE)

Evolution as an Integrated Optical Manufacturer and Expansion of Overseas Sales Networks

1960s–1980s

- 1964** Established Olympus Europe
- 1968** Established Olympus Corporation of America
- 1979** Established U.S. location in California (currently world's largest endoscope service center)
- 1989** Established Beijing residential office and corporation in Singapore

Diversification of Medical Business

1990s–2010

- 2001** Commenced collaboration with Terumo Corporation
- 2004** Acquired Celon AG
- 2008** Established first training center in China (Shanghai)
Acquired Gyrus Group PLC to strengthen surgical area of Medical Business

Advent of Observation Using Specific Light Spectra

Development of Endoscopic Surgery

New Era of Videoscopes

The development of videoscopes, which feature imaging elements such as CCDs built into their distal tips, contributed to a substantial increase in the accuracy of diagnoses. This increase in accuracy came from the ability to display images on monitors for multiple healthcare professionals to view.

Olympus continued to release innovative products, including HD surgical endoscopes—the world's first surgical energy device to integrate both advanced bipolar and ultrasonic energy—and 3D and 4K surgical endoscopes.

Olympus continued to accelerate the advance of technologies, such as narrow band imaging (NBI) technologies. As a result, endoscopes evolved from being mere observation tools to becoming medical devices capable of treatment and therapy.

2011
Introduced VISERA ELITE integrated surgical video endoscopy system

2012
Introduced THUNDERBEAT, world's first energy device to integrate both advanced bipolar and ultrasonic energy

2013
Launched 3D laparoscopy system and 3D laparoscope with world-first deflectable tip

2015
Introduced VISERA 4K UHD surgical endoscopy system incorporating 4K technology

2017
Launched VISERA ELITE II surgical endoscopy system compatible with 3D and infrared (IR) observation functions

2016
Launched EZ Shot 3 Plus single-use aspiration needle for Endoscopic Ultrasound-Fine Needle Aspiration (EUS-FNA)

2016
Entered into Japanese gastrointestinal obstruction market with launch of esophagus balloon dilators

2016
Commenced sales of colonoscope with 170 degree field of vision and 110 times optical zoom

2012
Introduced EVIS EXERA III and EVIS LUCERA ELITE next-generation platform systems for gastrointestinal endoscopy

2012
Introduced EVIS EXERA II and EVIS LUCERA SPECTRUM, endoscopic video systems that include NBI technologies

2002
Commercialized world's first IT knife specially designed for ESD

2002
Launched EVIS LUCERA, world's first HD endoscopy system

2009
Introduced first Olympus mirrorless camera, OLYMPUS PEN E-P1

2013
Launched flagship mirrorless camera OLYMPUS OM-D E-M1

2016
Launched IPLEX NX industrial endoscope featuring the series' top levels of brightness and resolution

2016
Released FV3000 laser scanning confocal microscope that displays life phenomena with exceptional speed and accuracy

2016
Introduced VANTA, the first handheld X-ray fluorescence (XRF) analyzer compliant with IP65 water and dust resistance standards

Transition from Stage of Reconstructing Management to Stage of Sustainable Growth and Development

2011–Present

- 2011** Deferred recording of past losses discovered
- 2012** Appointed new management team
Announced medium-term vision (corporate strategic plan)
Formed business and capital alliance with Sony Corporation
Transferred Information & Communication Business
- 2013** Security on Alert Designation placed on Company stock by TSE removed
Procured capital through public offering in overseas markets (approx. ¥110 billion)
Constructed Company's largest training and service center in China (Guangzhou)
- 2014** Withdrew from biologics business
- 2015** Integrated three companies and shifted to matrix style operational structure
- 2016** Increased production capacity (completed construction of new buildings) at medical endoscope development and production sites (Aizu, Shirakawa, and Aomori)
Announced new medium-term management plan, 16CSP