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Switzerland, the Mecca of Precision Manufacturing

By Yvonne Klöpping, Associate Editor 04.12.2011 0

Check out this MedTechInsider blog from sister publication European Medical Device Technology

When thinking of Switzerland, what first comes to your mind: the Alps? Cheese? Watches? Or is it the irresistibly delicious Swiss chocolate? When reading through Norbert Sparrow's blog "[Switzerland Deploys Nano Patrol!](http://medtechinsider.com/archives/22256)" <<http://medtechinsider.com/archives/22256>> on [medtech](http://medtechinsider.com/) <<http://medtechinsider.com/>> [insider](http://medtechinsider.com/) <<http://medtechinsider.com/>> last week, I was immediately reminded of my recent trip to Switzerland. Working on an article called "Precision, Made in Switzerland," which will be published on [emdt.co.uk](http://www.emdt.co.uk) <<http://www.emdt.co.uk>> later this month, I traveled across the charming country to report on companies that supply products and services to the medical device industry.

And yes, I got to taste some of that delicious chocolate and drove past the headquarters of Rolex and Swatch, but I didn't get to see the Alps. Instead, my eyes feasted on the Jura mountain range, where the country's watchmaking industry—and the legendary Swiss dedication to detail—have their roots.

If Switzerland had a motto, it might be something like "precision is our tradition." Take their watchmaking industry, for example. A luxury watch represents more than 300 precision parts and many hours of meticulous craftsmanship. The expertise required to manufacture minute parts to precise tolerances transfers remarkably well to the manufacture of medical devices. That fact alone makes Switzerland, especially the area bordering the Jura mountain range, a manufacturing Mecca for global medical device OEMs sourcing suppliers.

Switzerland has a lot to offer, and not just when it comes to quality of life. In 2010, the World Economic Forum (Davos) ranked Switzerland as the most competitive country in the world and the European Union named it as the most innovative country in Europe (even though Switzerland is not part of the European Union).

It is also the richest country in the world, by the way. Switzerland is one of the world's most stable economies that is based on a highly qualified labour force performing highly skilled work. The main areas include microtechnology, biotechnology and pharmaceuticals, all of which are sectors of interest to medtech manufacturers.

Clearly, the Swiss health industry plays an important role in the country's economic success. And now, as Norbert writes in his blog, Switzerland's National Research Programme "Opportunities and risks of nanomaterials" (NRP 64) wants to explore the

potential downsides of nanotechnology. And while the huge potential of nanotechnology in medical and countless other applications is well documented, its potential dangers are not—yet. But I'm confident that with the renowned Swiss dedication to detail and precision, NRP 64 will uncover all the risks that need to be considered when using nanotechnology, including—maybe especially—when it comes to medical devices.

So, the next time you're visiting the land of the Alps and watchmaking or are driving through it to get to France or Italy, take some time to look around. You'll notice the Swiss tendency toward detail and perfection, no doubt. It's everywhere—from chocolate to pinions. ♦