
EDITORIAL



The pharmaceutical industry enjoys a position of outstanding importance in the Swiss economy. In international competition, it is a trendsetter, and in terms of exports it is a global leader.

The financial success which the Swiss pharmaceutical industry enjoys in Switzerland did not come about by chance. It is the result of many years' intensive research and development work. The R&D investment of Novartis, Roche, Serono and Actelion in the last year amounted to 3.5 billion francs. That corresponds to about 30% of all R&D investments in Switzerland.

Apart from the major financial R&D investment which the Swiss pharmaceutical industry makes every year, a further important success factor for Swiss pharmaceutical companies is undoubtedly their rapid response to changes in the international pharmaceuticals environment.

In recent years, this industrial sector has seen a lot of radical changes. In research, the main changes that spring to mind are the huge advances made in the field of genomics, bioinformatics and lab automation. These advances have transformed biomedical research in the last few years – especially the target discovery phase and the lead identification process – into a veritable high-speed field of research.

The business environment for the pharmaceutical industry has likewise shown substantial changes in recent years. Examples of this are the consolidation process of the 'big players', the creation of numerous new specialized start-up companies, the globalization of markets, increased pressure on the prices of medicines through generics and government regulation, and the shifting of production to new sites that offer competitive advantages.

In this rapidly changing environment, the Swiss pharmaceutical industry has managed to keep pace with the best.

In R&D, the results of multidisciplinary teams working in harmony is becoming an increasingly important success factor. A competitive advantage which Switzerland has enjoyed in the past has been its role as a breeding ground for the best-qualified scientists in the fields of chemistry, biology, biochemistry, immunology and microbiology. If this advantage is to be preserved, it is essential that we continue to regard the quality of our training and education in Switzerland as one of our most important tasks and that we foster and encourage it accordingly.

I hope that the quality and variety of the following articles will provide the interested reader with an appropriate picture of the extremely exciting and diverse work that is going on in the pharmaceutical industry.

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It is with great pleasure that the Editorial Board of CHIMIA expresses its warmest thanks to the coordinating guest editor Dr. Reto Naef for his efforts in planning and collating the present attractive selection of contributions to the topic of the 'Pharmaceutical Industry in Switzerland'.