



The city of business

Successful research and development, e.g. Vifor Pharma

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St.Gallen's industry is traditionally centred on export. Numerous St.Gallen-based companies have focussed successfully on specific markets and lead the way internationally in their specialist fields. This is certainly true of Vifor Pharma, whose research, development and production unit Vifor (International) AG in St.Gallen produces medicines for the entire world. Its medicines treat iron deficiency anaemia. 15% of the world population³⁾ suffers from iron deficiency anemia. Vifor Pharma is a member of the Galenica Group and has its own subsidiaries throughout the world. Demand for iron-replacement treatment is continually rising. Vifor Pharma produces medicines for administering both orally and intravenously. The company has occupied a leading role in the latter area for many years. In 2013 Vifor Pharma achieved another milestone: Two new iron-deficiency medications discovered and developed in St.Gallen were approved by the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) for the US market. It goes without saying these products will also be produced at the St.Gallen location.

The tradition of producing medicines in St.Gallen goes back to 1952 when the former Laboratorien Hausmann AG opened its first plant in Sittertobel. Galenica acquired the company in 1983 before selling part of its activities to B. Braun Medical AG in 1991. What remained is the success of its medicines. For example, Vifor Pharma's oldest and globally used iron medicine, Venofer[®], has been produced since 1949. At its St.Gallen base, under the leadership of Dr. Hans-Martin Müller, Vifor Pharma now employs 260 people.

³⁾ Vos T Years lived with disability (YLDs) for 1160 sequelae of 289 diseases and injuries 1990–2010: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2010 Lancet. 15. Dez. 2012; 380(9859):2163-96. doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(12)61729



Vifor Pharma at a glance

- A global leader in the intravenous treatment of anaemia
- 260 employees in St.Gallen, a quarter of them in R&D
- Innovative medicines since 1949
- Some CHF 150 million invested in St.Gallen since 1999

Worldwide, Vifor Pharma occupies a leading position in the intravenous treatment of anaemia. To maintain this position, the company employs highly qualified and motivated researchers. All iron medicines produced and marketed by Vifor Pharma to date were researched and developed at its St.Gallen location. Iron metabolism is highly complex and still relatively unexplored. This gives talented researchers an additional incentive to search out new and innovative methods, and to continuously develop them at congresses and seminars.

From 1999 to 2015, the Galenica Group invested around CHF 150 million in Vifor Pharma's St.Gallen site in order to renew and expand capacities, principally in research and production. With the purchase of the Canadian company Aspreva, a new corporate division named Vifor Pharma was founded in 2008 with its head office in Zurich. As a result, some departments such as Marketing and Sales were moved from St.Gallen to Zurich. In 1999, Vifor Pharma employed a workforce of around 70 people in St.Gallen. In the meantime that figure has risen to 260. Around a quarter of them are employed in research and development, the remainder in production, analyses, quality assurance and other areas. In 2015, Vifor Pharma in St.Gallen produced around 2.5 tons of iron agents each working day.

Enhancement of product portfolio Based on an earlier strategic agreement with Fresenius Medical Care, the joint enterprise Vifor Fresenius Medical Care Renal Pharma AG, with its headquarters in St.Gallen, has been founded in 2010. This successful partnership led to a further significant enhancement of the product portfolio as well as the marketing and distribution organization in Europe.

The broadly based chemical and food industry in eastern Switzerland is a vital factor behind Vifor Pharma's presence there.

The company www.viforpharma.com

The Galenica Group www.galenica.com

Highly qualified laboratory and production workers are easy to find in St.Gallen's labour market. In particular, location manager Dr. Hans-Martin Müller praises the high level of motivation among workers from eastern Switzerland. One challenge for Müller lies in recruiting highly qualified personnel with degrees in pharmaceuticals and chemistry. In this area, he rates the St.Gallen labour market's links to nearby countries as central to his task. He also emphasises the city's very friendly business climate and the support and cooperation that the local authorities gave to Vifor Pharma when it was setting up its base.

Its proximity to the borders of Germany and Austria, to Lake Constance and the Alpine range, also makes St.Gallen an attractive place to live for Müller. Besides the high quality of life, he names the city's closeness to the airport as a factor in the attractiveness of St.Gallen as a business location. In addition, the University of St.Gallen makes an important contribution to the economy. «We have several times drawn on the advice of the HSG for various projects. In this way, we were able to integrate current findings from various specialist areas within our processes.»

Contact

Location Promotion City of St.Gallen

Rathaus, 9001 St.Gallen

Phone +41 71 224 47 47

standortfoerderung@stadt.sg.ch

www.standort.stadt.sg.ch