

Straumann provides exclusive insights into production site

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Fig. 1_ The Straumann production site is located in Villeret, a French-speaking municipality in the canton of Bern in Switzerland.

Fig. 2_ Packaging in Villeret.



_Straumann's manufacturing plant in Villeret in Switzerland recently opened its doors to representatives of the press to learn more about the manufacture of its dental implant products. The plant is Straumann's most important production site and one of the largest state-of-the-art facilities in the dental implant segment. It currently produces more than five million components per year.

The production plant in Villeret was established in 2000, and expanded in 2004 and 2009. Today, it covers about 15,000 m² and employs around 360 people. About 1,500 different types of finished products, including implants, prostheses and cutting tools, are manufactured in the facility. In total, 4,500 different components are produced at the site, which are then distributed through Straumann's headquarters in the Swiss capital, Basel. Almost all manufacturing processes for Straumann implants, except for sterili-

sation, take place in Villeret. Raw materials, of which the company holds a strategic supply for 18 months, are stored and tested for their mechanical and chemical properties on-site. A considerable number of high-tech machines manufacture the implants from titanium and ceramic bars under the constant supervision of operators.

After every production step, the workpieces are checked for quality assurance. According to Andrew Lowe, head of the Straumann Villeret facility, who led the two-hour tour through the production plant, only 16 in one million implants are returned by customers to the facility owing to manufacture-related issues.

Straumann collaborates closely with other technical companies in the region. For instance, PRECITRAME MACHINES, a company specialising in the development of state-of-the-art automated production equipment, designed a CNC machine with 12 workstations for Straumann that works ten times faster than any other CNC machine currently available on the market.

After the tour, Dr Gerhard Bauer, Head of Research, Development and Operations at Straumann, informed the journalists that, at a production capacity of 90 per cent in Villeret, Straumann has been able to reduce costs by 5 to 8 per cent in recent years. This has mainly been accomplished through increasing automation and efficiency in the production system and a comprehensive insourcing programme, Bauer said. Moreover, Straumann is planning to make the production process paperless within the next two to three years. The implementation of new software will render most of the paperwork required for such complex production unnecessary, according to Bauer.

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