

The Swiss Leading Hospitals

from visionary undertaking to leadership in hospital care

Medical thrillers are more popular than ever. We are fascinated by emergency room dramas and by cinematic spine-chillers adapted from the medical novels of Robin Cook. But when it comes to ordinary health care, for ourselves or for our loved ones, few of us have done the basic research. We think nothing of flying halfway around the world on holiday or on business trips. Yet how many of us know where to turn for the most effective, cost-efficient medical treatment? No doctor has a monopoly of medical genius. And no single medical centres anywhere in the world can claim to be best in every specialty. That's why Switzerland has come up with a breakthrough concept in health care. The innovation is called The Swiss Leading Hospitals. And it's a synergistic grouping together of some of the best medical facilities and best medical minds in the world.

A LONG TRADITION OF HEALING

Pilgrims from all over Europe came to Switzerland for health cures as early as the middle ages. The monks of the Benedictine monastery at Pfäfers, founded in 740, spread the fame of hot, healing waters discovered in the nearby Tamina Gorge, today the wellspring of the most abundant thermal spa in Europe. In more recent centuries, Swiss mountain towns were discovered to have beneficial effects, thanks to their clean air and altitude, for sufferers from tuberculosis and certain other diseases. A number of Swiss villages, including Davos, St. Moritz and Crans-Montana, were medical centres before they ever became famous ski and snowboard resorts. But perhaps the most enduring image of Swiss health is the Heidi story. Written in 1880 by Johanna Spyri, about a young girl who lives a simple pastoral life, the Heidi folk tale can today be read to adumbrate modern "holistic" medical theories. That is, treating the entire person - their lifestyle, their diet and so forth - and not just treating isolated symptoms of a disease. In the Heidi books, Heidi's city friend Clara gets out of her wheelchair and walks, after sampling the natural foods and unpolluted

air of the Alps. Today modern Swiss medicine is as thoroughly scientific as that in any industrialized nation. But even today Switzerland emphasizes the importance of the natural environment and creature comforts in healing.

A NEW ERA IN HOSPITAL CARE

Founded in 1999 by three leading Swiss private hospitals, The Swiss Leading Hospitals has become a prime example of the quality focus and service mentality of Swiss private clinics. Following the example of the "Leading Hotels of the World", The Swiss Leading Hospitals organisation is an association of Swiss private clinics focusing on the provision of "top medical care plus first-class hotel services", which clearly differ from conventional approaches focusing solely on the medical aspects of health care. Many of the clinics represented by The Swiss Leading Hospitals group are situated in ideal locations and equipped with the latest hospital infrastructure and tasteful, first-class facilities. They all pay special attention to nutrition and diet, and all have room service and menus comparable to a five star hotel. The Swiss Leading Hospitals opened new windows on marketing health care in Switzerland to an international audience. "Patients everywhere are far more mature in assessing their own health care need these days", says The Swiss Leading Hospitals president Beat Huber. "And we want to convince them that Switzerland is not only about Heidi and chocolate, but also about sophisticated medical treatment where the keywords "quality" and "caring service" are equivalent to the attention you get in the world's first class hotels" he adds. The Swiss Leading Hospitals will group together Switzerland's most prestigious clinics. All must be privately owned and runned. "We do not want managed groups", insists Beat Huber.

PUT THE PATIENT FIRST

Health care is in crisis all over the world. The 46 billion CHF Swiss health care system is going through a difficult period of transition and cost savings, too. The distortion of

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from GSBA Zurich and the University of Berne. He has started his career in Hotel management, assuming various management positions within Mövenpick Saudia Arabia, Ecuador, Brasil and Switzerland. In 1992 he took over the direction of the newly founded Clinic Pyramid which he has helped to build up to a leading private provider for surgical excellence. He is chairman of Clinic St. Raphael (Küsnacht/Zurich) and founding president of THE SWISS LEADING HOSPITALS.

competition by public influence burdens the private care providers. Unlike public institutions, private clinics are obliged to operate according to business criteria. With their patient focus, market-oriented approach, efficient structures and processes they are making a significant contribution to cost control in the Swiss health system. As a result The Swiss Leading Hospitals is increasingly involved these days in the direction of health care politics. The aim of the innovative hospital care concept, in Beat Huber's words is "to put the patient first". One way of doing that is to shorten hospital stays, to save patient money. Another is to provide quality assurance. Every The Swiss Leading member hospital is assessed regularly by certified inspectors and can lose its administration at any time if not up to the mark. Such transparency is excellent news for the patient, as is a yet to be finalized scheme whereby a single insurance policy will guarantee entry into any one of The Swiss Leading Hospitals. What the hospitals stand to gain is a brand image collectively that none of them could aspire to individually. In time, The Swiss Leading Hospitals hopes to expand internationally. After all Swiss Confederation itself started with three lonely members in a meadow more than 700 years ago.

LIST OF MEMBERS: 

Bethesda-Spital, Basel
Clinique de La Source, Lausanne
Clinique Générale-Beaulieu, Genf
Klinik Gut, St. Moritz
Klinik Lindberg, Winterthur
Klinik Linde, Biel
Klinik Pyramide am See, Zürich
Klinik Schloss Mammern, Mammern
Klinik Villa im Park, Rothrist
Merian Iselin Spital, Basel
Privatklinik Bethanien, Zürich
RehaClinic, Baden
RehaClinic, Zuzach
Sonnenhof Kliniken, Bern

SETTING THE BENCHMARK

The Swiss Leading Hospitals association was formed on the initiative of the Zurich Lakeside Pyramid Clinic in collaboration with the Sonnenhof Clinic in Bern and the Gut Clinic in St. Moritz. The goal of establishing a strong brand which would vouch for top services within the fields of medical care and infrastructure was reached within no time. So far, 14 hospitals meet the high standards of The Swiss Leading Hospitals. In the future there will be a maximum of 20 hospitals, all having a strong focus on medical core competencies covering all regions of Switzerland. Cross member communication and task forces form the structure of the important common basics in the areas of quality, medical outcomes, care, benchmarking, personnel, hotel business, marketing and logistic. The success of The Swiss Leading Hospitals sends a clear signal and sets national and international standards in modern hospital care.

Beat Huber

Further information:

www.swissleadinghospitals.ch

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