



# THE PLAIN DEALER

## Small manufacturers make transition to medical devices

Medical devices a growing market

Tuesday, March 11, 2008

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Many small Ohio companies that have made industrial products for generations are quietly moving into the burgeoning market for medical devices.

One maker of valves and fittings for industrial compressed gas systems now makes products for medical oxygen systems.

A precious metals company makes platinum electrodes for implantable medical devices.

So many manufacturers are getting into the medical business that Ohio now has the second-largest number of Food and Drug Administration-registered companies among Midwestern states, according to a recent survey by BioEnterprise, the bioscience development organization in Cleveland.

BioEnterprise found 625 FDA-registered companies in Ohio, second only to 966 companies in Illinois. Minnesota, a traditional leader in medical devices, has 577 such registrants, according to the survey.

More than half of Ohio's FDA registrants are in Northeast Ohio, said Baiju Shah, president and chief executive of BioEnterprise. The medical market represents "an amazing opportunity for Ohio manufacturing companies that have skills in precision electronics, in highly engineered polymers," Shah said.

While demand for industrial components may be flat or shrinking, demand for medical components is exploding. The market for medical device components alone is about \$300 billion a year and growing, Shah said.

Many of the Ohio manufacturers that are turning to medical are "looking for ways to grow and sustain their manufacturing enterprises . . . in the face of competition . . . that has caused much of their work to go overseas or offshore," he said.

Companies that sell parts for medical devices, such as heart pacemakers, must register with the FDA, said Don Mottinger, president of Superior Products Inc. in Brooklyn.

For decades, Superior Products made valves and fittings for industrial compressed gas systems, such as oxyacetylene welding equipment. About six years ago, Superior Products began making products that go into medical oxygen systems, said Mottinger, who bought a majority of the company in 1992.

Since getting its FDA registration four years ago, the company now also designs and sells medical products for hospital and home oxygen systems, as well as for equipment to treat sleep apnea, which causes people to stop breathing during sleep. Sales have grown 80 percent since Superior Products started selling medical products, Mottinger said.

Sales at the medical manufacturing group of Prince & Izant Co. in Parma are up 300 percent from a year ago, said Grayson Alexy, vice president of sales and marketing.

Prince & Izant, which traditionally has made metal joining products and precious metal parts used in aerospace, electronics and power generation industries, now also makes platinum electrodes for heart defibrillators and brain stimulators.

"It's probably 20 percent of our business now and rapidly growing," Alexy said.

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