

Intelligent bed on the way to the marketplace

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The innovative treatment bed is undergoing continuous testing in clinics and hospitals. Feedback from patients and medical staff is taken into account during further development of the system. Credit: Empa

At the end of May 2011, two "business angels" and a banking institute invested one million Swiss francs in Michael Sauter's company "compliant concept". The successful end to this first round of financing is a milestone for the mechanical engineer and young entrepreneur.

"This means that the intelligent bed can now become a reality," he says, joyfully. A detailed investigation by the [investors](#) came to the conclusion that his business is "forward-looking". The innovative new bed imitates the movements of a healthy person during [sleep](#), thereby preventing bedridden patients from developing bedsores (also known as decubitus ulcers). This also relieves [medical staff](#) of the necessity of gently and frequently turning patients in the bed – this is done by a special mattress

which lies on a joint-less but flexible slatted frame made of "smart" materials whose properties can be modified as required.

A successful spin-off from Empa and the ETH Zurich

The new system was developed by a team led by Michael Sauter, who two years ago founded a start-up company named «compliant concept». Supported by both Empa and the ETH Zürich, the spin-off enterprise currently boasts four employees (soon to be six) and is located in the glaTec technology center at Empa's Duebendorf site. "We are of course very pleased that we have found investors and industrial partners for the company," says Sauter. By the end of this year the first products, manufactured by an industrial partner, will be available on the Swiss market. "Despite this we are still interested in making new contacts with interested parties," he adds. After all, a second round of financing is not far away.

Thanks to an active exchange of ideas with contacts in the medical branch and good networking with potential partners, the young enterprise is already generating turnover. The company's Swiss sales partner, OBA AG, is marketing the monitoring system developed by «compliant concept», which logs the patient's movements and initiates the repositioning operation. "We have already sold the first 20 systems through our Swiss marketing partner," maintains Sauter.

A growing company searching for new markets

"This injection of cash allows us to take more employees on board," explains Sauter, adding that he is now looking for a sales manager. He is also searching for new markets. As one of the 20 winners of the «venture leaders» competition held by venturelab, Sauter had the opportunity of attending a 10 day business development program in

Boston in July 2011. As a result of detailed discussions then, he is certain that in the USA hospitals and clinics are particularly aware of the decubitus problem – every year there are about 2.5 million cases in the country. Treatment to cure bedsores costs on average \$43,000 per case. A solution such as that offered by Sauter's "intelligent" bed, with its prophylactic effect, is therefore especially welcome on the US market.

Excellent idea

The young enterprise «compliant concept» has repeatedly received awards over the past few years, most recently as a "nominee" of the de Vigier Foundation 2011 for the idea and its implementation by a potentially successful small business. Last year, in addition to the «Empa Innovation Award», the company received the KTI Medtech Award and in 2009 it was honored with the Heuberger Winterthur Young Enterprise Award. And as winner of the Start-up Competition organized by venturelab the company was invited in 2011 to participate in a 10 day business development program in the USA as a member of the "Swiss Start-Up National Team".

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