

Why a Swiss supplement?

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It might seem excessively nationalistic to name a journal supplement after a specific country (e.g., Swiss supplement, Italian supplement, Indian supplement etc.). However, the production of a national supplement of the *European Spine Journal* allows the editors to present to the readers a particularly unique characteristic or strength of that community which brings a stronger personal identity to the journal, while providing new perspective.

Switzerland's clinicians and scientists have been true pioneers in the orthopaedic and neuroscience fields. With the establishment of the AO Foundation over 50 years ago, and the subsequent growth of the foundation's spine activities, support for research, development and teaching has been a long-standing priority. Switzerland is a nation of inventors, with a proven track record of innovation and translation of ideas to clinical practice. The Swiss Med-Tech industry has no parallel in Europe, in terms of per capita investment in R & D and exports of medical devices.

In the academic environment, there is some pride in seeing one's institution among the elite in rankings. This applies also to the editor's respective universities in the field of engineering and life sciences, with the ETH in Zurich and the University of Lausanne being in the 15th and 41st place, respectively (Times higher education ranking for 2011–12). It has even less to do with ethnic

origins, since in a country such as Switzerland, a large number of nationalities make up the body of researchers and this is mirrored in the current composition of the supplement's authorship. Indeed, for all the reasons above, Switzerland is one of the few countries experiencing “brain gain”, with an immigrant population approaching 20 %, with a large proportion in highly skilled professions.

Furthermore, the *European Spine Journal* and the Spine Society of Europe have been intrinsically linked to Switzerland for many years now. The editorial office of the journal and the de facto administrative office of the society are both located in Switzerland. Professor Max Aebi has founded and guided the journal, as editor-in-chief, since its inception. Swiss scientists and clinicians are well represented on the editorial board of the journal and in the membership roster of the society.

Historically, Swiss authors have submitted a large number of manuscripts to the journal, in relation to the country's population, and these papers are traditionally of a very high quality. Swiss authors are well represented as winners of prestigious spinal sciences awards, including the GRAMMER award and the scientific awards of the Spine Society of Europe. On this basis, we are confident that the selection of papers in this supplement will offer something for every reader, and represents a high standard of clinical or scientific work.

Inevitably, some papers have originated from the editors' own collaborators. All papers went through the same robust blinded review process as any paper normally submitted to the *European Spine Journal* and this included outsourcing of editorial decisions, when required, to avoid any bias.

In the clinical part of the supplement, the reader can find papers on vertebroplasty, spondylolisthesis, pain screening questionnaires and other spine-related outcome measures,

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scoliosis surgery, spinal stenosis imaging and disc arthroplasty. In the basic science section, the reader will find studies on the in situ biomechanics of the scoliotic spine, the degenerative changes of the disc across all spinal levels, on the potential importance of notochordal cells, a unique perspective on anti-inflammatory agents and several papers exploring the interaction between native spinal tissue and novel biomaterials.

We hope, with this supplement, to give the reader an informative snapshot of the Swiss clinical and basic science fields and to stimulate further discussion and interaction.

Conflict of interest None.