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## **Life sciences businesses flourish in Manatee County**

EDC panelists plan for growth with new product line, clinical trials and medical residency program

What do orthodontic products, clinical surgical trials and a residency program for physicians have in common? They're all fueling Manatee County's life sciences industry, which was the featured topic at the May 21 "Business Buzz" event presented by the Manatee Economic Development Council (EDC) at USF Sarasota-Manatee.

Panelists included Brad Clatt of DENTSPLY Raintree Essix Glenroe, Brook Peterson of Trod Medical USA, and Dr. Robert George of Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine (LECOM).

"Hearing from executives in the life sciences industry reinforced our thinking that Manatee County is poised to attract more of these companies and their good jobs," said Eric Basinger, EDC executive director. "We have the resources and amenities to serve life sciences businesses, and by being tuned in to their needs, we can recruit more similar employers."

"I was surprised that we could find the resources and suppliers we need right here along Florida's West Coast," said Peterson, who located Trod Medical USA in Lakewood Ranch in 2009. Trod's surgical device for treating prostate and other cancers will be the subject of clinical trials by major institutions later this year, Peterson announced. The device is already FDA-approved, and Trod has lined up suppliers and manufacturing partners in the region with help from the EDC.

Peterson said that Trod chose Manatee County over the Orlando area because of the price and availability of the right facility and because the company felt welcome in Manatee County.

Panel moderator Jonathan Fleece encouraged the audience to support employers like Trod by urging state lawmakers to do away with redundant regulatory oversight of medical equipment manufacturing in Florida. The state duplicates federal programs, he said.

Clatt, whose business has two locations in Manatee County, announced that DENTSPLY is launching its own clear aligner orthodontic product, which will generate significant growth and National awareness of the company's Manatee County based facilities.

"I don't know what that will mean in terms of additional [employees]," Clatt said. "We have a strong culture of seeking out the best talent and developing our workforce." Clatt said his company is looking for ways to maximize the use of its existing space and to speed up the recruitment process for new employees. DENTSPLY was recognized with the Excellence in Industry award by the EDC in 2009 for growth/expansion.

LECOM, which is preparing to graduate its third class of medical students, is launching a physician residency program with Manatee Memorial Health Care System, said George.

"The economic impact of a residency program goes beyond the salaries of the physicians who will stay in the area when their residency is completed," he said. "During their residency, the physicians and their families will rent or purchase homes and shop locally."

LECOM considered locations in the Tampa area when the college decided to establish a Florida campus, but the Lakewood Ranch site was a better value and was more appealing than higher-priced sites in Hillsborough County.

**Catch the Next Business Buzz!**

The Manatee Economic Development Council will host a Business Buzz panel discussion and breakfast on the sports performance industry in Manatee County on June 17 at 7:30 a.m. at USF Sarasota-Manatee. Panelists will include executives from IMG Academies, the Pittsburgh Pirates and Coastal Orthopedics. Cost is \$15 for EDC investors; \$20 for others. Information: [DebbieS@ManateeEDC.com](mailto:DebbieS@ManateeEDC.com), or 941.748.4842, ext. 126.

**About the EDC**

The Economic Development Council, a division of the Manatee Chamber of Commerce, develops and implements programs to attract new high-impact businesses and to assist in the retention and growth of targeted existing businesses in Manatee County. Information: [www.ManateeEDC.com](http://www.ManateeEDC.com).

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