

PUTNAM PLASTICS CORP. — DAYVILLE, CONN.

Covid Slowed Catheter Business? No One Told Putnam

A leader in extrusions and assemblies for minimally invasive devices had double-digit growth amid global pandemic, opened a new facility, and continues to advance new technologies.

By **Jim Callari**
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While the ongoing global pandemic gave medical processors a business boost in 2020 and 2021, those who supplied catheters for elective surgeries saw their business dip. Not so for Putnam Plastics Corp., which grew by double digits last year, started an altogether new company to supply finished and packaged medical devices, and opened a new 57,000-ft² addition to its campus in Dayville, Conn., bringing its total capacity to more than 200,000 ft².

Putnam was founded by current CEO Jim Dandeneau in a two-bay garage in the mid-1980s. Today, Dandeneau and son Ryan, the firm's president, lead a 400-employee enterprise that specializes in advanced extrusions and assemblies for minimally invasive medical devices. Elective surgeries may have been cancelled during the early stages of the pandemic, but Putnam "was fortunate because our overall product portfolio was not heavily weighted toward those kinds of catheters," the younger Dandeneau says.

Last June, Putnam completed the expansion with its medical-device partners in mind, offering additional clean manufacturing space to expand its product slate. Putnam will be adding production lines and upwards of 100 employees when fully ramped up. "We had some big programs coming through the pipeline, so we started looking for a new facility a few years ago," Ryan Dandeneau recalls. "We looked at other locations, but we concluded that for our business it makes sense for us to have everything on one campus, to have all of our engineers in one building with access to a tooling room."

Putnam will be tapping into local talent and community colleges, as well as a \$2000 referral program, to fill those 100 spots. "Finding and keeping people is a concern for us, like everyone else in manufacturing," says Jim Dandeneau. "But we provide a clean

work environment and make life-saving products, which younger people generally find attractive." The elder Dandeneau notes that Putnam will be adding staff incrementally, as some projects in the pipeline won't reach the production phase until mid-year. "Still, the sooner we bring them onboard the better, as our training process can take up to six months."

Putnam currently has 25 extrusion lines; the new facility allows room for nine more full production lines and will also be equipped to accommodate what Jim Dandeneau calls "softer processes," notably secondary operations that include tipping, hole punching, laser machining/printing, insert molding and coiling. "The ability to furnish high-end, highly technical tubing all the way through finished devices such as complete catheters led last year to Putnam launching a

new company called Putnam Medical. States Ryan Dandeneau, "Some in the medical-device industry just focus on tubing. Some just do secondary operations. But we do everything in one building, fully labeled and packaged, with connectors, etc." Importantly, these are not Putnam-branded devices. CEO Dandeneau elaborates, "Many of our customers can't do everything in house, so they farm out certain projects to us. As long as we aren't producing our own device, we are not in a competitive situation with them."

Innovation continues to be a critical component in Putnam's strategy. "We are constantly looking at new materials and processes, and we have an advanced development group that reports directly to me and focuses just on that. Even now, we

believe we are among the few, if not the only, companies that can run polyimide-lined, multi-lumen, braided catheters on a continuous, reel-to-reel basis," says Ryan Dandeneau. On the equipment side, Putnam has built its own coiler with an automatic tension-feedback system that adjusts on the fly, a feature he says commercially available equipment does not provide. **PT**



Putnam Plastics CEO Jim Dandeneau (left) and his son, company president Ryan, at their new 57,000-ft² plant in Dayville, Conn. (Photos: Putnam Plastics)