

Albert Hofmann (1906-2008)

Switzerland has long had a strong pharmaceutical industry concentrated around Basel [e.g., Hoffmann-La Roche, Ciba-Geigy and Sandoz (today Novartis)]. Of the many researchers, space only allows mention of Arthur Stoll and Albert Hofmann, formerly of Sandoz. Stoll (1887-1971) left Willstätter's laboratory in 1917 to become Director of the newly founded pharmaceutical department at Sandoz. Together with Hofmann (1906-2008), he studied ergot alkaloids, cardenolides from many sources (scillaren A, lanatosides, D. purpurea glycosides, k-strophanthoside), sennosides, and *Allium sativum* (alliin, allicin), and they can be largely credited with the successful development of many new drugs from natural sources at Sandoz.

Hofmann (PhD under Karrer) investigated the active ingredients in medicinal plants and ergot, isolated lysergic acid (1938), synthesized LSD and detected its hallucinogenic activity (1943), and later isolated other psychoactive compounds (e.g., psilocybin and psilocin). He wrote "LSD: mein Sorgenkind" ("LSD: My Problem Child"), and in 2007, readers of the "Guardian" (England) chose him as one of the "world's top 10 living geniuses". – Otto Sticher, Ebmatingen, Switzerland