

CRITICAL EVALUATION OF MEDICAL TOURISM IN INDIA

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1. Introduction:

Now day's medical tourism has been key concern for the marketers as well as for the researchers. Medical tourism is one of the key drivers for the local economy as it creates new opportunities in the market. Medical tourism has to key sectors one is Medical/Medicine and other is Tourism. Medical tourism can be defined a practice of travelling from one country to other country to avail hi tech medical treatment. Traveling is from developed country to less developed country or to the developing country which has equal or better medical facility as compare to their own country. Medical tourism is one of the emerging sectors of India and is expected to grow very fast. The countries which are actively involved in medical tourism are Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Cuba, Southafrica, Greece, Hungry and India.

Canada is also one of the growing places for medical tourism. People from USA prefer Canada as a destination for the medical treatment.

Medical tourism is deliberately promotion of health services and of facilities to attract the tourists across the world in addition to existing tourists 1.The benefit which is achieved in medical tourism is that tourists get treatment in the respective country at the lower cost and they enjoy tourists spot of the country as well.2.Medical tourism is travel of people from one country to another for getting healthcare service by the respective country in terms of surgery, consultation etc. The term medical tourism is initially coined by travel agency and by the media.

2. Reason for medical tourism:

There are many reasons are involved behind the medical tourism. These reasons are as follows:

1. Low cost
2. Medical facility
3. Expertise
4. National Insurance policy
5. Waiting list
6. Ethical issues
7. Govt. policies
8. Social influence

1. **Low cost:** Low cost of the health treatment is one of the major reasons behind the medical tourism. Treatment available in lower cost with improved / better services is always preferred by the people. People want minimum investment and maximum benefit out of it.
2. **Medical facility:** Existing medical facility is also one the reason for the growth of medical tourism. Most of the underdeveloped and developing countries are not having infrastructure for the proper medical services.
3. **Expertise:** Lack of expertise in the field of healthcare and treatment is also one of the reasons for medical tourism. Many countries like Saudi Arabia, Middle East and UAE etc. are lacking expertise in medical field despite the infrastructure they have.
4. **National insurance policy:** Government insurance scheme or scheme provided by the insurance company is also one of the reasons to influence the medical tourism across the world. Insurance companies do not cover all the treatments and they vary accordingly. The treatment which is not covered and if it is costly it promotes people to go for some other alternate like treating it somewhere else at lower cost.
5. **Waiting list:** Long waiting time for the treatment is also one of the reasons for medical tourism. Shortage of both doctors and hospital bed problem in many countries especially in Europe. Patients generally do not prefer to be in trouble or in pain for longer period of time rather prefer fast and early treatment from outside.
6. **Ethical issues:** Ethical issues in medical practices causes' increment in medical tourism. Patient care, Interpersonal skill, Medical knowledge and work in the in interest of patient is also on the important aspects of medical treatment, lack of ethics leads to movement of patient from one place to another.
7. **Govt. policy:** Countries like India, Cuba, Malaysia and Thailand are inviting more investments in medical industry and expediting approval process hassle free. Various offers and promotions are given to the tourists to attract them and by giving them more preference than regular tourism.
8. **Fashion & Life style:** Life style and fashion is also one of the important factors behind medical tourism. People in many countries go for lifestyle treatments instead of treatment for any disease. The popular treatments are Facelift, Tummy truck and Botox treatments.

3. Medical tourism in India:

India is amongst one of the emerging country for the medical tourism in the world, although India is treasury of health and it had been for thousands of years. Indian Atharva Veda was the first Indian book dealing with medicine. Indian is known for its Ayurveda and yoga from centuries. Tourists across the world choose India as a key destination for the health treatment. There are the following reasons to choose India as a destination:

1. **Low cost:** Healthcare cost in India is substantially less than the other developing & developed countries and offers world class services. India provides variety of medical services to their tourists at reasonable cost.
2. **Advance medical services:** India is competing with western developed countries in medical services. Indian medical services are using advance technology and facilities to treat their patients. India have lots of hospitals offering world class services and verities

of health services like alternative medicine, oncology, neurosurgery, eye surgery, urology and plastic surgery etc.

3. **Availability of knowledge workers and Expertise:** Indian doctors are highly qualified and obtained training from the world class institutions & hospitals. In India there are approximately 350 colleges are giving education to 45000 students every year. Indian nurses are best among the world and are well trained. Around 1000 recognized training centers for Nurses are in operation in India and which gives nearly 10,000 graduate nurses every year.
4. **Support of Indian Government:** Government is also focusing on medical tourism and on health care sector by providing better infrastructure and support to the hospitals. Apart from it ministry of tourism are taking various measures for the promotion of medical tourism in India. These measures are:
 - **Medical Visas:** Initiative has been taken by the current government for immediate medical Visas relief for SAARC countries.
 - **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan:** Swachh Bharat Abhiyan initiative taken by the Prime Minister of India will change the customer perception of an unhygienic country.
 - **Participation in Worlds Travel Trade shows:** To show our presence at International level India has occupied dedicated space at International Tourismus-Börse Berlin (ITB Berlin).
 - **Marketing Development:** Ministry of Tourism has recently revised guidelines for the Marketing Development Assistance Scheme (MDA) for Medical Tourism. The financial support for the marketing will be provided to the approved tourism service providers. The service providers are the representatives of the hospitals. These hospitals have to be accredited by the joint Commission for International Accredited Hospitals (JCI) and National Accreditation Board of Hospitals (NABH). Medical Tourism Service Provider is referred as MTSP and Wellness Tourism Service Provider is known as WTSP.
 - **Road Shows:** Road shows are organized by the ministry of tourism from time to time to promote the silent and key features of the medical & tourism. The road shows organized earlier are in Dubai, Riyadh and in Kuwait.
5. **Language:** Language is always a barrier for the tourists in the world. There is no language barrier in India as majority of doctors and nurses are enough able to communicate in English which is an international language.

4. Medical Tourism Facts and Figure:

Infrastructure for medical tourism can be classified in three broad categories. These are:

1. High Quality
 2. Moderate Quality
 3. Dismal Health
1. **High quality:** High quality healthcare infrastructure provides sophisticated healthcare services and meets out the health care requirements. The countries which fall under this category are USA, Canada, European countries, Australia, Bangkok, Singapore, Japan & China.

2. **Moderate quality:** The countries which fall under this category are India, Russia, South Africa and South America.
3. **Dismal health:** The countries which fall under this category are Middle East, Africa and Eurasia.

Medical cost comparison:

Medical cost comparison has been given in Table 1. The comparison of cost for various health treatments is given for USA, India, Singapore, Thailand and for Malaysia. There is high difference in cost between USA and India and moderate for the South East Asian countries. Singapore, Thailand & Malaysia are the major competitors of India. There is average difference of \$3000-4000 between India and Thailand which is close competitor on India.

Table1: Medical Tourism Prices of Various Countries

Procedure	(\$USA)	(\$India)	(\$Thailand)	(\$Malaysia)	(\$Singapore)
Heart Bypass	140,000	6000	16000	12000	17000
Heart Valve Replacement	150,000	6000	21000	10000	22000
Knee Replacement	45000	5200	13000	8000	10000
Dental Implant	3000	1000	4000	2000	3500
Spinal Fusion	90,000	7000	10000	6000	9000
Hip Replacement	50000	6500	8000	7000	3000
Breast Implants	9000	3200	3000	2800	2500
Tummy Tuck	10000	4000	5000	5000	4000
Gastric Sleeve	25000	5000	14000	13000	12000
Face lift	16000	4000	3500	3500	8000

*these are indicative cot only, cost is dependent on the medical condition of the patient

Success story of Indian Medical Tourism:

- India stands 2 second in the world for qualified doctors.
- Indian health industry is expected to become \$280 billion industry by 2020.
- India hosts about 1.27 million tourists from across the world.
- Apart from allopathic treatment India is also providing alternative medicine technique such as Ayurvedic, Sidha, Unani, Yoga, Acupuncture and Homeopathy which are very popular among foreigners.
- India is among world’s top 5 medical tourism hotspots.
- 166,000 visited India in 2012 only.
- India contributes 2-3 % of world medical tourism.

Conclusion:

There is huge opportunity for medical tourism in India. Low cost & expertise are key competitive advantages for India. India is having advance technology and is capable of treating all kind of health related issues. India is having unique basket of services to offer to tourists

across the world. Apart from promotion and other initiatives, government should provide tax incentives to the service providers to foster the medical tourism. Maintaining health standard is essential to make favorable health care destination.

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