

MEDICAL TOURISM - DESTINATION INDIA

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ABSTRACT

In present scenario tourism industry is gaining enormous economic benefits. It is not confined itself only to hotels, restaurants and viewing historical sight scenes, but has touched rural areas, health sector as well. The globalization of the health care sector and the massive demand for low cost-high quality treatment for health in recent times has caught the attention of many developing countries like India that have the adequate resources and potential to meet these demands. The developing concept of Medical tourism in India has gained tremendous popularity and is attracting people from all over the world for their medical and relaxation needs. Now a day people from other countries are preferring India for their medical treatment like heart surgery, knee transplant, cosmetic surgery, hip replacement and dental surgery. This study explains why India has emerged as destination for medical tourism. It also explores challenges and competitive advantages and future outlook of medical tourism in India

Keyword: Medical Tourism, Medical Package, Destination India

INTRODUCTION

Medical tourism is a recent jargon in the market combining the two of the fastest growing industries in the world; healthcare and tourism. Medical tourism is not a new concept as this practice of traveling for seeking the best healthcare was present in ancient times also. The only difference is that earlier the wealthy patients from less developed countries used to travel to developed countries in order to avail the technologically most advanced medical facilities. Over the time the scenario has changed and now the wealthy persons from developed nations is increasingly seeking expert healthcare services at most affordable rates and quick response in the developing countries. India is considered to be one of the best destinations for medical tourism due to the availability of specialized team of doctors and world-class medical treatments along with world famous exotic tourist attractions. People

from other countries are choosing India as their medical treatment destination because it has a highly skilled medical fraternity; low treatment costs, cutting edge technological advancements & rich cultural heritage have made India the hub of Medical Tourism. Medical tourism is perceived as one of the fastest growing segments in marketing 'Destination India' today. India has really become a global leader in medical tourism and is one of the world's least expensive choices among medical tourism destinations. Medical tourism is a growing sector in India. India's medical tourism sector is expected to experience an annual growth rate of 30%, making it a \$2 billion industry by 2015^{(1) (2)}. An estimated 150,000 of these travel to India for low-priced healthcare procedures every year⁽³⁾. As the Indian healthcare delivery system strives to match international standards the Indian healthcare industry will be able to tap into a substantial portion of the medical tourism market. Already 17 Indian hospitals have been accredited by the Joint Commission International (JCI). Accreditation and compliance with quality expectations are important since they provide tourists with confidence that the services are meeting international standards. India provides international quality of medical care at the lowest rates, in comparison with any other part of Asia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reddy (2000) written that the healthcare industry has the potential to show the same exponential growth that the software and pharmaceuticals industries have shown in the last decade. Worldwide the market for healthcare is expected to be over \$4 trillion and of this over \$ 750 million will be the share of the developing world. This would make the healthcare industry the largest service sector industry in the developing world. Mukherjee and Mookerji (2004) mentioned that after Singapore and Thailand, India may be the next multimillion dollar Asian medical industry. Apollo hospitals group, Wockhardt, Escorts, Fortis, Hinduja and Breach Candy are some of the names in healthcare that have come forward to tie up with tourism industry players like Hyatt, Kuoni, Indian Air lines and Bangladeshi carrier GMC to offer discount-laced customized packages to international medical tourist to India. Baxi (2004) reported that India is well positioned to tap the top end of the \$3-trillion global healthcare industry because of the facilities and services it offers, and by leveraging the brand equity of Indian healthcare professionals across the globe. India's medical expertise is comparable to the best in the world and the work done by doctors in India is recognized all over. The key reason for India's emergence as an important destination for healthcare is due to Indian doctors who are renowned world over. There are over 35,000 specialty doctors of Indian origin in the US alone. Also, Indian nurses are the most sought after and their caring approach towards treatment is well recognized. Rao (2005) described that a substantial number of foreigners are coming to India to avail the quality medical treatment at a cost much lower than that of other countries of the world, particularly in the field of cardiology, cardiac surgery, joint replacement, ophthalmology, pathology and Indian systems of medicine etc. The government of India has constituted a task force to promote India as a health destination for persons across the globe so as to gainfully utilize the healthcare expertise and infrastructure available in the country.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study tries to get an overview of the medical tourism in India. This study explains why India has emerged as destination for medical tourism. It also explores challenges and competitive advantages and future outlook of medical tourism in India. This is exploratory work which is based on past literature review, including published research, web sites, newspapers, and the travel and tourism magazines that carry medical tourism related information. This study also tries to understand why developing country like India is more successful in promoting medical tourism than others. It gives an approximate comparison of the cost of medical treatments offered in India, USA, Colombia, Costa Rita and Thailand.

Medical Packages (Treatments) Provided

The following are the broad category of medical packages provided by Indian hospitals

- Dental Care
- Eye Care
- Heart Surgery
- Cosmetic Surgery
- Orthopedic Surgery
- Health Checkup
- Pediatrics
- ENT Care
- Gastroenterology
- Nephrology
- Neuro Surgery
- Oncology
- Ophthalmology
- Psychiatry
- Genitourinary Care

It also provides traditional method of treatments such as:

- Ayurvedic Therapies
- Homeopathy
- Naturopathy
- Yoga
- Meditation
- Unani

Some of the Indian Hospitals for Medical Tourism

1. Apollo Hospitals, Chennai, Ahmedabad
2. Escorts Heart Institute & Research Centre, New Delhi
3. Fortis Hospital
9. Narayana Hrudayalaya, Bangalore
10. Indraprasth Apollo Hospital, New Delhi
11. Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai

4. Wockhardt Hospitals, Mumbai, Bangalore
5. Arvind Eye Hospitals, Madurai
6. Manipal Heart Foundation, Bangalore
7. Mallya Hospital, Bangalore
8. Shankara Nethralaya, Chennai
12. Hiranandani Hospital, Mumbai
13. AIIMS, New Delhi
14. KG Hospital, Coimbatore
15. Ruby General Hospital, Kolkata, West Bengal

In terms of locations – Delhi, Chennai, Bangalore and Mumbai cater to the maximum number of foreign patients.

Major healthcare players in India such as Apollo and Fortis have reported 10 per cent of their revenues from the medical tourism segment⁽⁴⁾

Challenges for Medical Tourism In India

The medical tourism sector has lot of potential to grow but is also confronted with many challenges that need to be tackled. The major challenges in the field of medical tourism that countries face across the globe are as follows:

Competition: Normally, the majority of medical tourists come from the industrialized countries of the world especially Europe, the UK, Middle East, Japan, U.S. and Canada where the cost of medical treatment is very expensive and there are often long waiting times for treatments. On the flip side medical tourism boom is happening not only in India but in other countries like Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, South Korea, Brazil, Belgium, Cuba, Costa Rica, Hungary, and Jordan is also promoting medical tourism whereas India is likely to lose out foreign patients

Follow-Up Problems: The follow up care is very difficult in case of patient taking treatment in India. If the patient gets any complications after surgery and is back to his own country, the follow up is not only difficult but expensive also.

Language and Culture: Language barriers pose major challenge in medical tourism. The country may offer expert doctors and highly sophisticated medical systems but if the doctors, nurses and other medical staff do not understand the language of the patient, the whole process becomes extremely difficult for the patient as well as the staff. Sometimes there is a fearful state of mind for foreign patients about traveling so far away from home to unknown culture place

Brain Drain: In the countries with a pool of talented doctors and nurses like India, it is a major challenge to retain these professionals. There is shortage of such skilled professionals in most countries across the globe and thus they are offered the best salaries abroad.

Growing customer expectations: Patient expectations are growing as foreign patients have more options for high quality criteria today. There is growing pressure for more personalized services. There is a demand for high responsiveness. It is the business of managing the total customer experience where price is transparent but value is opaque.

Coordination: Poor coordination between the various players in the industry- hospitals, air line operators, and hotels is also challenging before medical tourism in India.

Quality: Receiving safe and high quality medical care is the primary issue for patients considering medical tourism as an alternative treatment. When patients choose other countries instead of their home town for medical care, they don't just consider the price. Patients also are considering the quality of medical care that the international medical facilities provide because medical standards may vary widely from one medical care facility to another and from one country to another. Many hospitals in India still don't have national and international accreditation by quality monitoring bodies like National Accreditation Board for Hospitals & Healthcare Providers (Indian Accreditation Body) and international board like Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO)/ Joint Commission International (JCI)

Infrastructure: Infrastructure is a major concern affecting India as a destination. Some drawbacks include lack of proper flight connectivity to all destinations, bad roads, safe food and water availability etc.

India as a Destination for Medical Tourism

“First World Treatment at Third World Costs”

A combination of three key factors – quality, availability and cost has been key factors in fuelling the phenomenal growth witnessed in the Indian medical tourism industry. India is a leading player in the medical. It is increasingly emerging as the destination for medical tourism for a wide range of medical facilities for foreign patients. There are numerous advantages of coming to India for treatment for foreigners. Some of the advantages of coming to India for medical treatment are



Expert Hospital Staff

India has a number of hospitals, large pool of doctors (approx 7, 00,000), nurses & supporting staff with required specialization and expertise and the language advantage (English speaking skills) servicing patients. Many of these doctors after having specialized and practiced in the Western countries have returned home to set up impressive state of the

art facilities with the latest in equipment, technology and service levels particularly in Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Ahmedabad, Pune, Hyderabad and Chennai. The highly skilled doctors with wide experience and international exposure excel in Cardiology and Cardiothoracic surgery, orthopedic surgery, Obesity surgery, Gastroenterology, Ophthalmology, Dental, and Urology and Cosmetic/Plastic surgery departments.

Quality

Already 17 Indian hospitals have been accredited by the Joint Commission International (JCI). Accreditation and compliance with quality expectations are important since they provide tourists with confidence that the services are meeting international standards. Almost all Indian Hospitals servicing Medical Tourists are accredited either by Joint Commission International (JCI) or National Board for Accreditation of Hospitals and Heath Care and follow International safety standards. India remains a safe and preferred medical tourism destination.

Personalized Services

In India, according to the famous words “Atithi Devo Bhava” refers tourists are treated as God. foreign patients are understood as guest for the country and they are given a place equal to that of god in Indian culture. It is this tradition that makes the Indian people to provide the personalized services. Foreign tourists coming for medical treatment in India are taken very much care.

Technology The most popular treatments sought in India by medical tourists are alternative medicine, bone-marrow transplant, cardiac bypass surgery, eye surgery and orthopedic surgery. India is known in particular for heart surgery, hip resurfacing and other areas of advanced medicine. All medical examination and treatment are conducted using the latest technologically advanced and cutting edge diagnostic equipment. Stringent quality assurance exercises consistently ensure reliable and high quality test results in a timely manner.

Language

Even though India has many different languages, English is widely spoken. All hospitals have excellent large pool of good English speaking doctors, nurses and other hospital staff and even guides. This makes it easier for foreigners to communicate well to Indian doctors if English is not their native language; they are also arranging translators in most major international languages to be with patients during their Indian tour.

No waiting Period

Patients in USA, Britain, Canada and some other developed countries have to wait for the major surgery and sometime this waiting period is more than few months. In this respect India have almost zero waiting tome for surgeries. This has resulted in attracting number of foreign patients from Britain, USA, Canada to India for their medical treatments.

Compare Cost

Complicated surgeries and treatment are made possible at almost 1/10th the cost of developed countries in developing countries like India. Indian medical tourism is being promoted as First World Treatment at Third World Costs. India is now being put up on international map as a heaven for those seeking quality and affordable healthcare. This lower cost is especially important for a patient who does not have health insurance and for whom a procedure may be financially crippling in the home country.

Medical Procedure	USA	Colombia	Costa Rica	India	Jordan	Korea	Thailand
Heart Bypass	\$144,000	\$14,802	\$25,000	\$5,200	\$14,400	\$28,900	\$15,121
Angioplasty	\$57,000	\$4,500	\$13,000	\$3,300	\$5,000	\$15,200	\$3,788
Heart Valve Replacement	\$170,000	\$18,000	\$30,000	\$5,500	\$14,400 + valve	\$43,500	\$21,212
Hip Replacement	\$50,000	\$6,500	\$12,500	\$7,000	\$8,000	\$14,120	\$7,879
Hip Resurfacing	\$50,000	\$10,500	\$12,500	\$7,000	\$10,000	\$15,600	\$15,152
Knee Replacement	\$50,000	\$6,500	\$11,500	\$6,200	\$8,000	\$19,800	\$12,297
Spinal Fusion	\$100,000	N/A	\$11,500	\$6,500	\$10,000	\$15,400	\$9,091
Dental Implant	\$2,800	\$1,750	\$900	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$4,200	\$3,636
Lap Band	\$30,000	\$9,900	\$8,500	\$3,000	\$7,000	N/A	\$11,515
Breast Implants	\$10,000	\$2,500	\$3,800	\$3,500	\$3,500	\$12,500	\$2,727
Rhinoplasty	\$8,000	\$2,500	\$4,500	\$4,000	\$3,000	\$5,000	\$3,901
Face Lift	\$15,000	\$5,000	\$6,000	\$4,000	\$4,400	\$15,300	\$3,697
Hysterectomy	\$15,000	N/A	\$5,700	\$2,500	\$6,000	\$11,000	\$2,727
Gastric Sleeve	\$28,700	\$7,200	\$10,500	\$5,000	N/A	N/A	\$13,636
Gastric Bypass	\$32,972	\$9,900	\$12,500	\$5,000	N/A	N/A	\$16,667
Liposuction	\$9,000	\$2,500	\$3,900	\$2,800	\$4,000	N/A	\$2,303
Tummy Tuck	\$9,750	\$3,500	\$5,300	\$3,000	\$4,000	N/A	\$5,000
Lasik (both eyes)	\$4,400	\$2,000	\$1,800	\$500	\$5,000	\$6,000	\$1,818
Cornea (both eyes)	N/A	N/A	\$4,200	N/A	N/A	\$7,000	\$1,800
Retina	N/A	N/A	\$4,500	\$850	N/A	\$10,200	\$4,242
IVF Treatment	N/A	N/A	\$2,800	\$3,250	\$2,700	\$2,180	\$9,091

Notes: Prices are approximate and not actual prices and include estimated airfare for patient and companion. Prices will vary based upon many factors including hospital, doctor's experience, accreditation, currency exchange rates and more. Not included are costs for meals, miscellaneous expenses and any hotel costs or tourism costs.

Source: <http://www.medicaltourism.com>

Added advantage of Medical Tourism India

India has been the most attractive destination for the visitors around the globe. India is a perfect destination for medical tourism that combines health treatment with visits to some of the most alluring and awe-inspiring places of the world. Medical Tourism in India is an absolute package of health care, wellness, sight seeing, discovering a new destination, pleasure, and loads of savings.

India has a very old civilization of more than thousand years and is known for its cultural and religious diversities with diverse geographical landmarks. In addition to existence of modern medicine, excellent medical practitioners, India has popular indigenous traditional healthcare system which include Ayurveda, Yoga, Meditation, Siddha, Unani, Naturopathy, and Yoga.

Ayurveda or Ayurvedic Therapy is a healthy-lifestyle system that people in India have used for more than 5,000 years. Ayurveda is a holistic system of medicine from India that uses a constitutional model. Its aim is to provide guidance regarding food and lifestyle so that healthy people can stay healthy and folks with health challenges can improve their health. It is based on the belief that health and wellness depend on a delicate balance between the mind, body, and spirit. The primary focus of Ayurvedic medicine is to promote good health, rather than fight disease. But treatments may be recommended for specific health problems. Ayurveda emphasizes good health and prevention and treatment of illness through lifestyle practices (such as massage, meditation, yoga, and dietary changes) and the use of herbal remedies.

Unani System of Medicine is an ancient way of disease diagnosis and cure. In recent times this branch of indigenous medical science has gained interest in India. It is one of the oldest systems of medicine in the world and owes its origin to Greece. This system was invented by Greek philosopher and physician, Hypocrates. This system is mainly based on humeral theory of sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric and melancholic. Unani can arguably cure many incurable diseases like arthritis, leucoderma, eczema, asthma, migraine, malaria and filaria. Unani drugs are prepared from roots, herbs and the minerals. Pulse reading forms the basis of diagnosis in this system.

Naturopathy is also known as natural medicine or naturopathic medicine. It focuses on the use of natural remedies and the body's ability to heal itself. Naturopathic practitioners use many approaches to healing, such as nutrition, herbs, manipulation of the body, exercise and stress reduction. Naturopathic treatments offer a holistic approach to healing with a very minor use of surgery and pharmaceutical drugs. They go after the source of the problems,

instead of just treating symptoms. Practitioners also educate patients about their illness, how to care for themselves and how to prevent future illnesses

India has been a tourist hot spot and has lured foreigners predominantly because of its mysticism, spirituality, exotic locales, and rich history and culture India is an enchanting country. Bounded by the magnificent Himalayan ranges in the north and fringed along the west, south, and east by a continuous stretch of beautiful, sunny beaches, India is a vibrant combination of breathtakingly stunning landscapes, thick tropical forests, glorious historical sites, royal cities, colorful people, rich cultures and innumerable festivals. It is country where temple elephants subsist cordially with the computer chip. Some of the sites are Ellora Caves, Goa Beach, Golden Temple, Khajjiar Hills, Khajuraho Temples, Madurai Temple, Rajasthan Deserts, Taj Mahal, Red Fort - New Delhi

Thus India is an exotic tourist destination offering everything from modern medical treatment to traditional health care to enjoyment of visiting some awesome places of India

Government

In India the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Ministry of Tourism have jointly formed a Task Force with a view to promoting India as a Health Destination for persons across the globe so as to enable them to gainfully utilize the health care expertise and infrastructure available in the country. The aim is to expand the range of the tourism products in India, both for domestic and international market. For this, streamlining of immigration process for medical visitors is necessary. In this connection, the Government of India has introduced a new category of Medical Visa (M-Visa) which can be given for specific period to foreign tourists coming to India for medical treatment.

Added advantage is provided by the uplifting government policies in India. The government led initiatives and campaigns such as Incredible India!, Colors of India, Atithi Devo Bhavah and the Wellness Campaign for promoting the Indian tourism and hospitality industry adds to the creation of appeal amongst the foreign tourists.

The Ministry of Tourism India (MoT) is planning to extend its Market Development Assistance (MDA) scheme to cover Joint Commission International (JCI) and National Accreditation Board of Hospitals (NABH) certified hospitals. JCI stands for Joint Commission International and is a nongovernmental organization that provides hospitals worldwide with accreditation. They are the international standard.

Promotional Measures

Ministry of Tourism has initiated several measures to promote Medical Tourism. This includes promotion and overseas markets and production of publicity materials like brochure, CD and films etc. and their distribution in target markets.

Future of Medical Tourism

Medical tourism is a growing sector in India. India's medical tourism sector is expected to experience an annual growth rate of 30%, making it a Rs. 9,500-crore industry by 2015. Estimates of the value of medical tourism to India go as high as \$2 billion a year by 2015.

India is quickly becoming a hub for medical tourists seeking quality healthcare at an affordable cost. No of foreign tourists are expected to rise by 2015. Availability of alternative medicine healthcare services, like Ayurveda, Homeopathy, Unani, etc. makes it all much more appealing for India to attract foreigners a lot of countries including USA, UK, Canada, and South Africa. India has immense potential for future growth and development in this sector. Hence, hospitals in India have a very bright future. Medical tourism in India has promising future.

CONCLUSION

In the past the growth potential of the medical travel industry in India has been hindered by capacity and infrastructure constraints but that situation is now changing with strong economic progress in India. With more and more hospitals receiving JCI accreditations and foreign patients concern on safety and quality of care are becoming less of an issue for those choosing to travel for medical treatment at an affordable cost. The combined cost of travel and treatment in India is still a fraction of the amount spent on just medical treatment alone in western countries. Indian medical tourism is being promoted as First World Treatment at Third World Costs. Long promoted for its cultural and scenic beauty, India is now being put up on international map as a heaven for those seeking quality and affordable healthcare.

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