

## **MEDICAL TOURISM IN INDIA AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN MEDICAL TOURISM SECTOR**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Medical tourism refers to people traveling abroad to obtain medical treatment. In the past, this usually referred to those who traveled from less-developed countries to major medical centers in highly developed countries for treatment unavailable at home. However, in recent years it may equally refer to those from developed countries who travel to developing countries for lower-priced medical treatments. The motivation may be also for medical services unavailable or non-licensed in the home country.

Medical tourism can be defined as the process of traveling outside the country of residence for the purpose of receiving medical care. Growth in the popularity of medical tourism has captured the attention of policy-makers, researchers and the media. Originally, the term referred to the travel of patients from less-developed countries to developed nations in pursuit of the treatments not available in their homeland.

Today we are experiencing both qualitative and quantitative shifts in patient mobility, as people travel from richer to less-developed countries in order to access health services. Such shift is mostly driven by the relative low-cost of treatments in less developed nations, the availability of inexpensive flights and increased marketing and online consumer information about the availability of medical services.

What really puts the word "tourism" in medical tourism concept is that people often stay in the foreign country after the medical procedure. Travelers can thus take advantage of their visit by sightseeing, taking day trips or participating in any other traditional tourism activities.

## **HISTORY OF MEDICAL TOURISM**

The practice of travelling for health and medical reasons has a long history. Even the ancient civilizations recognized the therapeutic effects of mineral thermal springs and sacred temple baths. For example, the Sumerians constructed health complexes around hot springs more than four thousand years ago, which included temples with flowing pools.

Ancient Romans built resorts with thermal health spas, and therapeutic temples thrived during the Greek domain. Ancient Greeks were known for their travels to the sanctuary of the healing god, Asklepios, believed to reveal remedies for different ailments in the dreams. This sanctuary was in fact a small territory in the Saronic Gulf named Epidauria – today considered as the birthplace of medical tourism as we know it.

### **Europe**

It was the Europeans in the sixteenth and seventeenth century that are responsible for the development of a modern pleasure resort concept. Seaside resorts in the United Kingdom (such as Blackpool or Margate) were built due to the belief of the British elite that there are real curative powers in sea waters and sea air. Very quickly England saw a boom of different spa towns and sanatoriums accommodating those who could afford to make the trip.

Spas and mineral water were used to cure illnesses such as various skin infections, poor digestion and rheumatism. In mainland Europe, Switzerland offered a plethora of towns grown up around mineral springs (St. Moritz, Lausanne, Interlaken and Baden). People also flocked to Austria (Vienna), Hungary (Budapest) and Germany (Baden-Baden and Wiesbaden).

The formation of the railways increased the flow of people to more remote coastal and seaside resorts, providing in turn a unique and escapist environment from urbanization, as well as the opportunity to practice what was viewed as a healthy pleasure of sun-seeking.

### **North America**

The discovery of the New World revealed new destinations for medical travelers from Europe. Dutch and English colonists assembled log cabins alongside mineral springs in the 1600s. During this period, Native Americans in the New World were notably adept in the healing arts.

In the United States and Canada, mineral springs were used for the development of spa tourism, around which the first national parks have been established. The physical morphology of springs can result in distinctive natural landscapes that also helped draw visitors from all corners of the world (e.g. Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming, USA).

In the nineteenth century, wealthy tuberculosis sufferers from Europe often travelled to (and lived) in south-west United States, seeking different climate conditions in order to improve their health. That kind of behavior arguably predates modern-day lifestyle retirement and second home migration for similar reasons of extending quality of life. However, traveling with the intention of receiving treatments, such as cosmetic surgery, dental care and other complex procedures is a relatively new phenomenon, having begun only several decades ago throughout the world.

### **Asia**

Asia has a history of medical tourism as well. Japan's affluence of natural mineral springs (also known as *onsen*) has represented a favorite health retreat for centuries, and they are also a central feature of Japanese tourism today. These springs are known to have healing powers derived from its mineral content. Different warrior clans also took notice of these springs and used them to heal wounds, alleviate pain and recuperate from their battles.

Yoga and Ayurvedic medicine grew in popularity five thousand years ago in India, wherein constant streams of medical travelers and spiritual students flocked to pursue the benefits of these alternative-healing methods. India procured reputation as the center of Eastern spiritual, cultural and medicinal progress when Buddhism came along 2500 years later. Today it is one of the most popular destinations for medical tourists.

### **IMPORTANCE OF MEDICAL TOURISM**

Medical Tourism is a unique concept in the travel and tourism industry. It plays an important role in the tourism sector. A large number of people traveling for every year. Medical tourism helps in the development of economy and living standards of the human civilization. Importance and benefits of medical tourism are following as:

- Hugely beneficial for economic development.
- Creates more healthcare jobs.
- Creates more healthcare facilities.
- Give access to the latest technology in the medical sector.
- Improve the quality of life for everybody involved.
- Participating in Global Healthcare.
- Increase Better Global Healthcare Standards.
- Better Knowledge Exchange.
- Generate Foreign Revenues.
- Social Benefits.
- Political Benefits.
- Economical Benefits.

### **GLOBAL SCENARIO**

The global medical tourism market is expected to grow with a CAGR of 8.5% during 2017-2025. The factors associated with the growth of the market include higher treatment cost in developed countries, availability of the latest medical technologies, growing compliance on international quality standards, high quality of service, health insurance portability, and advertising and marketing of the medical tourism.

The cost of undergoing medical treatment in a developed country is very high. It is estimated that although the treatments are of reliable quality, the procedures tend to be on the expensive side. Along with this, the major healthcare products are also quite extravagantly priced. This scenario places a big burden on the healthcare

systems, worldwide, accompanied by the additional rising costs of litigation during recent times. Healthcare practitioners need to be aware of both the direct and indirect costs and consider how the implementation of prevention protocols may offer cost savings in the longer term. People in developed countries cannot afford the huge expenditure associated with medical treatments. Not all medical bills are covered by insurance companies, which makes the patients turn to countries abroad. Countries in Asia, the Middle East, and South America provide high-quality medical services at a much lower rate, as compared to the developed economies. There are companies that cater to all the medical and non-medical needs of the tourist during their travel. The global medical tourism market was valued at \$53,768 million in 2017, and is estimated to reach at \$143,461 million by 2025, registering a CAGR of 12.9% from 2018 to 2025.

The global medical tourism market is segmented based on treatment type and region. Based on treatment type, the market is categorized into dental treatment, cosmetic treatment, cardiovascular treatment, orthopedic treatment, neurological treatment, cancer treatment, fertility treatment, and other treatments. Based on region, the medical tourism market size is studied across North America (U.S., Canada, and Mexico), Europe (the UK, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and rest of Europe), Asia-Pacific (India, China, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, South Korea, Taiwan, and, rest of Asia-Pacific), and LAMEA (Brazil, Venezuela, Costa Rica, UAE, South Africa, and rest of LAMEA).

### **Key Market Trends**

- **Fertility Treatments Segment Expected to Have Highest CAGR**

The fertility treatments segment of the medical tourism market is believed to show the fastest growth over the forecast period. The segment is expected to record a CAGR of 9.7% over the forecast period. Fertility treatment is one of the most common treatments for which medical tourists elect to travel across international borders. Fertility tourism or reproductive tourism is one of the fastest-growing areas.

About 20,000 to 25,000 couples annually seek assisted reproductive technology services abroad. An estimated 4.0% of European Union citizens receive treatment in

other countries. Fertility treatment procedures are regulated in most European countries.

- **Asia-Pacific Currently Dominates the Market**

The Asia-Pacific region currently dominates the medical tourism market and it is expected to continue its stronghold for a few more years. This region is expected to increase its market share in the future, owing to the raised preference of medical tourism across the developing countries of this region. China holds the majority of the market in the Asia-Pacific region. This is due to the lower cost of the treatment in China and the better healthcare services provided.

### **MEDICAL TOURISM IN INDIA**

Medical tourism is a growing sector in India. In October 2015, India's medical tourism sector was estimated to be worth US\$3 billion. It is projected to grow at a CAGR of 200% by 2020, hitting \$9 billion by 2020. In 2017, 495,056 patients visited India to seek medical care. The top 10 source countries for patients have been Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Iraq, Maldives, Oman, Yemen, Uzbekistan, Kenya, Nigeria and Tanzania, with significant number of patients also coming from Australia, Canada, Russia, the UK, and the United States.

To encourage applications and ease the travel process for medical tourists, the government has expanded its e-tourism VISA regime on February 2019, to include medical visas. The maximum duration of stay under this visa is 6 months.. India has another special type of VISA for nurses or attendants of Medical Visitors called India Medical Attendant Visa with a view to promote medical tourism.

Over the years, India has grown to become a top-notch destination for medical value travel because it scores high over a range of factors that determines the overall quality of care. Complex surgical procedures are being done in a world class global hospital by acclaimed medical specialists at a fifth to tenth of what it normally takes in the West.

### **BENEFITS OF MEDICAL TOURISM IN INDIA**

From quality of therapy, range of procedural and treatment options, infrastructure and skilled manpower to perform any medical procedure with zero waiting time, the list of benefits of travelling for medical treatment in India are many.

- **Cost-effectiveness and affordability:**

The prime reason for tourists to come to India for medical treatments is the huge reduction in costs of treatments. The worry that the reduced cost of treatment indicates a compromise in the quality standards is misplaced due to the fact that healthcare in India is low due to the cheapness of labour costs in the country.

- **High-quality of healthcare:**

Many doctors and surgeons, who treat patients in India, receive their training from top-notch medical institutes in and around the country and even from developed countries like the UK and the USA. This speaks for the high quality of healthcare in India. Medical and surgical procedures are performed by highly qualified doctors in hospitals with the supreme healthcare equipments. Indian medical centres have garnered certification from world class bodies like ISO, JCAHO, and JCI and NABH.

- **Availability of world-class equipment:**

Many Indian hospitals are equipped with the best of world-class healthcare equipment. This is because of the rising number of corporate hospitals entering the arena of medical tourism.

- **No language barrier:**

Doctors and nurses in India are well versed in English. Corporate hospitals also hire translators for patients speaking other foreign languages, for easy and convenient treatments.

- **Immediate service:**

Foreign patients receive instant access in Indian Hospitals, however not at the cost of domestic patients. In place of waiting for long waiting lines in their foreign patients get priority here. For certain health conditions, waiting for a long time is not an option and the immediate service hugely benefits the patients.

- **Improved travel and leisure services:**

Treatment schedules can now be booked by phone or laptop. Internet has facilitated medical tourists to book flights and schedule surgeries in the comfort of their homes. This removes the need for costly arrangements for check-ups and evaluations. If one part of medical tourism is about healthcare, another aspect is to recuperate in beautiful locations. Some medical tourists seeking cosmetic care, wellness treatments or dental care can enjoy cheap opportunities of exploring India. The total package for health care and tourism will still be a fraction of the price of care in their country.

**Some of the growing areas that are popular among medical tourists in India are as follows:**

- Spine surgery
- Eye surgery
- All kinds of joints and bones treatment
- Treatment of blood vessels
- Cosmetic surgery
- Stomach treatments
- Treatments and surgeries related to the heart
- Dental treatments
- Laser removal of hair
- Ear, Nose, and Throat (ENT) treatments
- Hair implants
- Infertility treatment
- Beauty and spa treatments

## **TOP MEDICAL TOURISM DESTINATIONS IN INDIA**

### **1. Chennai, Tamil Nadu**

Chennai is the most popular destination for medical treatment in India. Nearly, 40% of the country's medical tourists arrives in Chennai for medical treatment, a study conducted by Confederation of Indian Industries (CII). Latest reports showing that Chennai receives up to 200 foreign patients daily due to high quality medical treatment, low cost and best experience. Apollo Hospital is the most popular private hospital in the city.

According to Economic Times, healthcare tourism in India market will be US\$2 billion. Chennai is the preferred destination among the foreign patients due to many benefits. There are so many special facilities are provided by the private hospitals in Chennai to provide best experience. Chennai has bright future ahead for medical tourism. It became health tourism capital of India.

### **2. Mumbai, Maharashtra**

Besides financial capital of India, Mumbai is fastest growing medical hub at International level. Mumbai has world class private hospitals and medical centers. Mumbai is the perfect destination for all types of surgery, ayurveda treatment and others.

Mumbai is also popular healthcare hub for domestic patients from other cities of Maharashtra as well as states. It has best hospitals for all medical treatment such as dentistry, pregnancy, cosmetic surgery, orthopaedic treatment, weight lose and so on.

Growth rate of medical tourism in Mumbai is very high due to world class facility. There are so many popular private hospitals are located in the city. For example, Kokilaben Hospital, Hinduja Hospital, Lilavati Hospital, Saifee Hospital, Breach Candy Hospital and so on.

### **3. Goa**

Besides vacation destination of India, Goa is growing to become international hub of medical tourism. Now a days, private hospitals provides special facilities to foreign patients. Natural environment of Goa is superb and it also attracts foreign patients to select Goa besides other destinations. Government also support to promote health and wellness tourism in Goa.

#### 4. New Delhi

New Delhi is the national capital of India. Besides political activities, New Delhi has vast numbers of world class private hospitals. They provides medical packages such as Neuro Surgery, General Surgery, Eye/Ophthalmology, Heart Care/Heart Surgery and so on.

New Delhi has famous hospitals such as Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital, Fortis Hospital, AIIMS and much more. Please check out reviews for each and every hospital before your final decision.

#### 5. Ahmedabad

Ahmedabd was once known as the 'Manchester of India'. It is now another fastest growing medical hub of India. Thanks to world class hospitals in the city. Lots of Non-Residents Indians (NRIs) prefer Ahmedabad for their medical treatment. It provides best experience for medical treatment.

Ahmedabad has so many famous hospitals such as Civil Hospital (Asia's largest civil hospital), Sterling Hospital, Apollo Hospital, Shalby Hospital, SAL Hospital, Rajasthan Hospital and others.

### **SCOPE OF MEDICAL TOURISM IN INDIA**

India's medical tourism industry is poised to grow by 200% by 2020, hitting \$9 billion, according to Ministry of Tourism figures. Along with the expansion of the industry, India is also making it easier for people who arrive here for medical treatments. It's

major advantages are advanced facilities, skilled doctors and low-cost treatment along with popular traditional practices such as yoga and Ayurveda.

With 234,000 foreign tourists on medical visas in 2015, India ranked as the third most popular country for medical tourism. By 2017, the numbers reached 495,056 as per government figures.

In response to a query raised in the Lok Sabha, Tourism Minister KJ Alphons replied in a written response stating, "India can provide medical and health care of international standards at low costs," "India excels in the state of the art medical facilities, reputed health care professionals, quality nursing facilities and traditional healthcare therapies."

Visa rules have also been changed to encourage applications. The e-tourist visa regime has been expanded including medical visas as well. Medical and medical attendant visas have been introduced to ease the travel process of medical tourists. The maximum duration of stay in India under the e-medical visa is a longer duration of six months, said Mr Alphons.

People visit India for a variety of health care needs, including cancer treatments, transplants and cardiac surgery. In India, the savings can start from 65% and go up to 90% with patients receiving quality care. "Indian doctors have a reputation for high-quality medical training. A lot of them are returnee Indians who have studied abroad, and then you have large hospital groups such as Apollo, which have become large international brands. They have also gone into strategic partnerships with brands in high-income countries." Many of the patients in India come from neighboring countries and other developing nations. "There's also a huge diaspora market, such as people who are British but born to Indian parents," said Johanna Hanefeld, an associate professor of health policy and systems at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

For India's private health care providers, medical tourism is a lucrative business. In 2018, Max Healthcare, a chain of private hospitals, treated up to 50,000 foreign patients, with the majority traveling from the Middle East, central Asia and Africa.

Patients often come for specialized care that requires specific equipment or expertise. Sonika Raina, a representative for Max Healthcare. "These include high-end cardiac surgeries, including pediatric cardiac surgery, cancer treatments, neurosurgery, spine surgery, transplants, bariatric surgery, trauma-related orthopedic surgery and IVF," said Sonika Raina, a representative for Max Healthcare.

### **Traveling for traditional health practices**

Medical tourism is also getting more attention and expansion due to the promotion of traditional Indian health practices such as Ayurveda, yoga, Unani, Siddha and homeopathy that increases the numbers of medical tourists.

Ayurveda is an ancient Hindu system of medicine based on the notion of balance within the body. It uses herbal treatment and yogic breathing. Siddha and Unani are similar in their holistic approach to finding harmony between the mind and body, with the origins of Siddha lying in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, while Unani can trace its roots back to the time of ancient Greece.

All these practices come under the Ministry of AYUSH, created in 2014 to improve access and to create more awareness of these traditional methods.

A 2018 report by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry estimated the AYUSH Industry of India to be worth around \$2.4 Billion in 2014-15.

### **OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENTREPRENEURS IN MEDICAL TOURISM**

Entrepreneurship has opened a wide field of action both within tourism itself and within complementary medical services such as the following:

- **Specialized transportation services:** Tourists visiting for medical purposes have a niche market and a unique profile ensuring adequate opportunity to provide with them customizable services.
- **Tourism agencies and tour-operators:** Tourism and travel agencies can plan, design and deliver packages that best suits the medical and tourism needs of the patients, that covers all of their requirements.

- **Tourist offices located in hospitals:** They can act as both tourist offices at hospitals and also as a marketing division of hospitals, thus bridging the service providers with people who require these services. They can manage both specific internal services and services provided by other local tour-operators and provide extra services such as ticketing, obtaining or extending visas, foreign exchange etc.
- **Professional services:** They can also provide other professional services to the patients that may include reservations, software support, remote medical consultations, etc.
- **Wellness centres, centres for rejuvenation etc:** They can develop wellness centres, centres for rejuvenation etc, within or near existing tourist accommodation facilities, taking advantage of certain traditions and local natural resources.
- **Staff training companies:** Factors affecting patients' satisfaction should be identified and special training programs can be given to staffs and employees since the nature of provision of service is unique and people who receive such services may have different hospitality expectations.
- **Brokers in medical tourism:** The ever increasing demand for health care across the world has led to the emergence of the need of having smart people with connections in medical and insurance sectors to help patients avoid long waiting times, negotiate prices, etc on a fee basis. Organisational and legal factors, personal motivations and expectations affect these activities to become registered and recognised and respectable.
- **Public relations companies:** Some companies can be specialized in the promotion of medical tourism among the public, obtaining support from local and central authorities, etc.

## CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that medical tourism is a richly opportune field for entrepreneurs to invest their minds and money in. As long as humans live, healthcare needs will

remain and the demand for quality healthcare will be on the rise. If properly worked upon, medical tourism proves to be the sector to work upon. Corporatization of healthcare by transforming “healers” to “dealers” is not entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs of developing countries must make use of the cost differentials that make healthcare cheaper in their countries. Combining that with the structural implementation of properly designed ideas will definitely lead to the progress of both the sector and also the entrepreneurs. They have the power to integrate cheap healthcare, luxury hotels and exotic locations to revolutionise the concept of medical treatments which was hitherto mostly considered as a sad or worrisome affair. The traditional health practice along with India's reputation in modern, Western approaches, is fueling the country's rise in medical tourism.

Lastly, utilising the said opportunities solely rests upon people coming forward with innovative ideas and the government assisting them in promoting and establishing, what will be, the crucial industry which is most in demand for the global medical service requirements.