



Medical Tourism in India

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ABSTRACT

Medical tourism in India has emerged as the fastest growing segment of tourism industry. India ranks second for medical tourism in the world. It has become a favored destination for people from all over the world for medical care and for various treatments. For almost all treatments, India has cost advantages. Its price is the lowest among any nation in the world. The present paper highlights the current scenario of Medical Tourism industry in India. It also presents the various initiatives taken by Indian government to promote medical tourism in the country. After analyzing the facts, it can be concluded that the biggest challenge is to position India as a favorable healthcare destination by setting high health standards and work in association with the government and the medical council to see to it that all hospitals keep up to those standards.

Keywords : Health tourism, Medical tourism, Medical care

INTRODUCTION

Medical tourism is a term involving people who travel to a different place to receive treatment for a disease, ailment, or condition, and who are seeking lower cost of care, higher quality of care, better access to care, or different care than they could receive at home (*definition by Global Spa Summit LLC 2011*). In other words, medical tourism is the act of traveling to obtain medical care. There are three categories of medical tourism: outbound, inbound and intrabound (domestic) (see *Table 1*)

Table 1: Types of medical tourism

OUTBOUND	Patients traveling from home country to other countries to receive medical care
INBOUND	Patients from other countries traveling to home country to receive medical care
INTRABOUND (DOMESTIC)	Patients traveling within home country to receive medical care outside their geographic area, typically to a Center of Excellence in another state/region

MEDICAL TOURISM SCENARIO IN INDIA

India has been the most attractive destination for the visitors around the globe. But the recent trend in the tourism sector shows a propelling growth in this industry. This is not only because of the heritage attraction of the country but due to growing medical care facilities in India.

Medical tourism is a developing concept and this sector is growing at a very fast rate. India ranks second for medical tourism in the world. In India, people from world over visit for their medical and relaxation needs. It is also offering other

medical services like yoga, meditation and ayurveda, which is increasingly becoming popular as a non-surgical treatment for various ailments among the foreign patients. *Table 2* depicts the percentage of foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) in India for medical treatment from the year 2009 to 2012. Highest percentage of FTA for medical treatment was in year 2010 followed by 2012.

Table 2: FTAs in India for medical treatment (2009- 12)

Year	FTAs in India (number)	Percentage of FTA for medical treatment
2009	5167699	2.2
2010	5775692	2.7
2011	6309222	2.2
2012	6577745	2.6

Source: *India Tourism Statistics 2012*

Table 3 gives country wise classification of FTAs in India for medical purpose from the year 2009 to 2012. It is clear from the table that, percentage of maximum FTAs came from South Asia (comprising of Afghanistan, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Bhutan) in the year 2009 (8.2%), 2010 (8.9%) and 2012 (9.3%). In 2011 highest number of FTAs came from West Asia (8%) followed by South Asia (7.4%) and Africa (6.9%). After South Asia, next highest FTAs came from West Asia (comprising of Bahrain, Iraq, Israel, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, UAE, Yemen) followed by Africa (comprising of Egypt, Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania).

Table 3: Country wise classification of FTAs in India for medical treatment (Year 2009-12)

Country	Year 2009		Year 2010		Year 2011		Year 2012	
	FTAs (no.)	% of FTA *						
North America	1024469	0.3	1173664	0.3	1239705	0.3	1295968	0.3
Central & South America	47672	0.4	62728	0.3	60988	0.3	63699	0.3
Western Europe	1610086	0.2	1750342	0.2	1838695	0.3	1853066	0.4
Eastern Europe	182843	0.4	227650	0.5	274598	1.1	312686	1.9
Africa	165874	4.5	204525	5.4	232386	6.9	261428	8.5

West Asia	201110	7.1	235317	7.5	278773	8	290996	8.4
South Asia	982633	8.2	1047444	8.9	1139659	7.4	1171499	9.3
South East Asia	348495	0.5	439043	0.7	521755	0.7	540914	0.6
East Asia	318292	0.1	411947	0.1	475951	0.1	535622	0.1
Australasia (Australia, new zealand and others)	181849	2.4	210275	0.1	233165	0.4	244511	0.4

Note: * percentage of foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) in India for medical purpose

Source: India Tourism Statistics 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012, Available at <http://www.tourism.gov.in>

Medical tourism industry is also a growing source of foreign exchange as well as prestige and goodwill outside the country. It is expected to experience an annual growth rate of 30%, making it a \$2 billion industry by 2015. India has become a favored destination for people from all over the world for medical care and for various treatments. Most common treatments are heart surgery, knee transplant, cosmetic surgery and dental care. Besides India, there are several Asian destinations like Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand that are offering Medical care facilities and promoting medical tourism. India excels among them for the following reasons: -

- Most of the doctors and surgeons at Indian hospitals are trained or have worked at some of the medical institutions in the US, Europe, or other developed nations.
- No language problem as doctors and nurses in India are fluent in English.
- Top -of-the-line medical and diagnostic equipment from global international conglomerates is available at many Indian hospitals.
- Even the most budget-conscious traveler can afford first-rate service and luxury amenities.
- No waiting time for availing the medical facilities.
- For almost all treatments, India has cost advantages. Its price is the lowest among any nation in the world (see Table 4).

Table 4: Cost Competitiveness (in US\$)

Procedures	USA	India	Thai-land	Sing-apore	Mala-ysia	South Korea	Mexico	Costa Rica	UAE
Heart bypass	133000	7000	22000	16300	12000	31700	27000	24100	40900
Heart valve replacement	140000	9500	25000	22000	13400	42000	30000	30000	50600
Hip replacement	57000	7020	12700	1200	7500	10600	13900	11400	46000
Knee replacement	53000	9200	11500	9600	12000	11800	14900	10700	40200
Face lift	16000	4800	5000	7500	6400	6600	11300	4900	n/a
Lap. Gastric bypass	52000	9300	13000	16500	12700	9300	11000	n/a	n/a

Source: MSE Monograph 26/ 2013, Medical Tourism in India: Progress, Opportunities and Challenges

Moreover this year, fall of rupee against dollar has proved advantageous to the patients from Middle East, Africa and SAARC countries to the extent of 35 to 45 per cent on complex surgeries. The medical procedure that cost a medical tourist US \$10,000 in 2010 would cost around \$7,000– a 30 per cent difference. An Australian having the same procedure would also pay 45 per cent less. Similarly, patients paying in Euros would save around 25% to 35% in this current scenario. The number of medical tourists coming to India has also jumped by 40 per cent in the past six months (April 2013 to September 2013).

As the medical tourism sector grows, however, little is known about the impact this is having on its health workforce. Private hospitals argue that medical tourism reverses the brain drain. The health workers, who are migrating to economies where salaries are higher and career opportunities more attractive, will stay in India if they can work in the medical tourism sector. But, there are fears that medical tourism could worsen the internal brain drain and lure professionals from the public sector and rural areas to take jobs in urban centres.

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN PROMOTING MEDICAL TOURISM IN INDIA

Indian Government has undertaken various measures to promote India as a global health destination. The Indian Ministry of Tourism (MoT) has started a new category of visas for medical tourists called the “M” or medical visas. Further, efforts have been made to improve the basic infrastructure including aviation sector to ensure smooth arrival and departure of health tourists. Government is inviting and attracting foreign and private investors to invest in the infrastructure, aviation,

and pharmaceuticals sectors to provide best quality of services to their customers. MoT have also prepared brochures, CDs and other publicity materials and widely circulated them in target markets to promote medical and health tourism

Various road shows are being organized by India’s MoT to promote medical tourism. In October 2009, four impressive Road Shows in the high potential markets in the Middle East at Dubai, Doha, Kuwait and Jeddah were organised. These road shows were supported by Indian Medical Travel Association (IMTA). Various Indian Hospitals, Wellness services providers, Government and medical tourism facilitators participated in these events. In another major promotional campaign to promote India as a Medical Tourism destination, MoT along with FICCI organised a dedicated Medical Tourism road show in Kenya and Tanzania in August 2012.

The Union MoT has also included Medical Tourism under the Marketing Development Assistance (MDA) Scheme. The MoT provides financial assistance under MDA to the following approved Medical Tourism Service Providers:

- Representatives of Hospitals accredited by Joint Commission International (JCI) and the National Accreditation Board of Hospitals and Healthcare Services (NABH).
- Medical Tourism facilitators (travel agents/tour operators) approved by Ministry of Tourism, Government of India

The MDA is for participation in medical/tourism fairs, medical conferences, wellness conferences, wellness fairs, and allied road shows. Table 5 presents the details of MDA granted to various service providers under medical tourism during the last three years i.e. 2010-2013.

Table 5: Details of MDA grant to medical tourism service provider (Year 2010- 11 to 2012-13)

Name of Medical Centre/ Medical Tourism Service Provider	Amount
Year 2010 - 11	Rs. (in lakhs)
Kerala Institute of Medical Sciences(KIMS), Kerala	191255
Escorts Heart Institute and Research Centre, New Delhi	86149
Indian Holidays Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi	73500
Indian Holidays Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi	198987
Indraprastha Apollo, New Delhi	153636
Sri Ramachandra Medical Centre, Chennai	200000
AMRI Hospital, Kolkata	52155
Escorts Hospital and Research Centre, Faridabad	49635
Indraprastha Apollo, New Delhi	193014
Total	1198331
Year 2011-12	
Moolchand Medicity, New Delhi	136794
Ruby Hall Clinic, Pune	138420
Maharishi Ayurveda Hospital, New Delhi	147000
Dr. Pattnaik's Laser Eye Institute, New Delhi	200000
Bangalore Baptist Hospital, Bengaluru	200000
Sri Ramachandra Medical Centre, Chennai	200000
Ayurvaid Hospital, Bengaluru	200000
Godrej Memorial Hospital, Mumbai	150000
Star Hospitals, Hyderabad	154545
Total	1526759

Year 2012-13	
Narayana Hrudalaya, Bengaluru	185747
Yashoda Super Speciality Hospital, Ghaziabad	200000
Primus Super Speciality, New Delhi	188475
Wavikar Eye Institute, Thane	44810
Asian Heart Institute & Research Centre, Mumbai	150000
Total	769032

Source: LARRDIS, No. 13 /RN/Ref./August/2013

CONCLUSION

Medical tourism in India has emerged as the fastest growing segment of tourism industry. India as a medical tourist destination is unique as it offers holistic medicinal services with yoga, meditation, ayurveda, allopathy and other medical facilities. It offers a unique basket of services to an individual that will be difficult to match in other countries. For Indian healthcare institutions, the quality of service is the biggest benefit, followed by the cost advantage.

The Indian medical tourism industry is presently at a blossoming stage, but has an enormous potential for future growth and development. It is expected to experience an annual growth rate of 30%, making it a \$2 billion industry by 2015. India is in an advantageous position to tap the global opportunities in the medical tourism sector. The government's role is crucial to the development of medical tourism. The government should take steps in the role of a regulator and also as a facilitator of private investment in healthcare. Mechanisms need to be evolved to enable quicker visa grants to foreign tourists for medical purposes. The biggest challenge is to position India as a favorable healthcare destination by setting high health standards and work in association with the government and the medical council to see to it that all hospitals keep up to those standards.

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