

MEDICAL TOURISM: EMERGING PROSPECTS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

India is emerging as a prime destination for healthcare and contributing a lot towards social economical development of the society. India ranked 2nd for medical tourism in the world. Medical tourism is a rapidly mounting the flow of travelers across international borders to obtain health care. Medical tourism is a fast growing industry around the world. Medical tourism is an act of travelling to obtain finest medical care in another country. World Health Organization defines medical tourism as tourism associated with travel to health spas or resort destinations where the primary purpose is to improve traveler's physical well being through process of physical exercises, dietary control and medical services significant to health maintenance.

India has become a prime destination of choice for patients from all hemispheres due to a wide range of medical services and surgical procedures. There are several internal and external factors which hinder medical tourism in India. The competitive advantages of India in medical tourism are: low cost advantage, advanced technologies, low cost treatment. For almost all treatment India has low cost advantage, its price is lowest among any nation in the world. Today Indian hospitals are well equipped with the latest technology and proper accessibility of advanced equipments.

Key Words: World Health Organization, Dietary Control, Surgical Procedures Medical Services, Health Maintenance.

INTRODUCTION

The World tourism defines tourist as people who travel and stay in places external to their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year. Tourism has become a popular global leisure activity. It is also called health tourism or wellness tourism. A Tourist who is coming to indulge himself in healthy and pure atmosphere to learn the art of yoga and medications, to rejuvenate oneself at the spas or for maintaining their looks by travelling to Cosmetic Surgeries clinic will be considered as a medical tourist. Indian government is launching various schemes and programmer to promote health tourism and inviting foreign and private investors to invest in hospitals and accommodation center. It is a quick growth of industry where people come from other country to obtain medical, dental and surgical treatment with low cost. Such services typically include elective procedures as well as complex specialized surgeries such as joint replacement, cardiac surgery, dental surgery and cosmetic surgeries. Medical tourism in India is a multibillion dollar provider industry and attracting millions of foreigners to visit the country. India is a country of well skilled doctors and trained professionals .India's doctors are very knowledgeable and they are making India a destination for people who want to undergo treatment for their medical problems. Today Indian clinical and paramedical style is universally recognized as Joint Commission International (JCI) Accreditation to some hospitals of India has proven a boon to Indian medical system which is helping in advance the faith of foreign patient's in Indian hospitals. Here follows the list of JCI accredited hospitals in India :

- Artemis Health Institute (Gurgaon)
- Asian Heart Institute and Research Center (Mumbai)
- Ahalia Foundation Eye Hospital (Kerala)
- Aster Medicity (Kochi)
- Apollo Gleneagle Hospital (Kolkata)
- Apollo Hospital (Banglore)
- Apollo Hospital (Chennai)
- Apollo Hospital (Hyderabad)

- Fortis Escorts Heart Hospital (New Delhi)
- Moolchand Hospital (New Delhi)
- Medanta-the Medicity (Gurgaon)
- Narayan Hrudayalaya (Banglore)
- Narayan Multi Speciality Hospital (Jaipur)

India is offering cheaper treatment in comparison to US, UK, Singapore and Thailand .Unlike India, various Asian countries are upcoming forward to initiate steps to explore medical tourism .India is eminent for its traditional treatment therapies and have made a recognized place in the medical literature by providing Unani , Ayurvedic, Allopathic, Homeopathic and Naturopathy advantages not only to Indians but also to foreign nationals. Medical tourism is a very fast growing sector in India. The foremost reason for growing importance of medical tourism in India is the cost of medical treatment which is comparatively 40% less than offered by any other foreign country .This section of tourism is increasingly gaining importance and attracting several large corporations such as pharmaceuticals , industrial companies, and several NRIs and foreign investors to invest money in setting up super-specialty hospitals in India. Apollo, Med Nova, CDR Mediciti in Hyderabad, Hindujas and Wockhardt in Mumbai, Max in Delhi etc. are a few to quote in this category. Study shows that India is one of the greatest growing sector in medical tourism. Indian hospitals specialize in areas of both modern and traditional medicine.

Indian doctors are recognized in heart surgery, plastic surgery, cancer treatment, cardiology, eye care and orthopedic treatment. The compound procedures like cardiac surgery, bone marrow transplant, and liver transplant are now habitually carried out in India at lowest costs. The cost of medical treatment here is on average of one eight to one fifth of those in the West. Therefore, many foreigners come here for their treatment. Indian hospitals are well equipped with advanced infrastructure facilities that help in providing best treatment to patients. An integrated system of tools, techniques, education and training facilities are also developed in hospitals.

OBJECTIVES

Following are the objectives of this research study:-

- To inspect the role of Indian Government in promoting Medical Tourism and Medical Tourist inflow.
- Medical tourism panorama in India.
- Medical tourism and increasing economy.
- Domestic medical tourism.
- This research work also strives to comprehend why India is more competent in promoting medical tourism than others.

METHODOLOGY

Secondary data is accumulated through different sources like internet, newspaper, reference materials, magazines, books, magazine, and research articles for this study. This work explores opportunities and designing the suitable strategies for developing medical tourism in India which helps to design the strategies being used for promoting medical tourism in India.

RESULT

The outcome confirms that destination competitiveness and service value play an important role in the medical tourist's mind towards medical tourism. Tourism is the biggest service industry in India with an outstanding contribution to the national GDP and the employment in India. The tourism industry in India generated about US \$100 billion in 2008 and that is anticipated to increase to US \$275.5 billion by 2018 at 9.4% annual expansion rate. The Ministry of Tourism is the nodal agency for the development and promotion of tourism in India and maintains "Incredible India" sort of campaign to attract foreign nationals. We can definitely say that India has become one of the most wanted destinations for medical tourists from other countries.

Medical tourist coming from other countries have admittance to all information which provide specialized services to them which include taxi pick up from airport ,daily care and nursing

services. Needless to say that extension of medical tourism in India has fashioned plentiful job opportunities in the hospitals, hotel and voyage sectors in order to provide professional examine for the foreign tourist who are in need of professional services. The tourists feel easy when all their necessities are taken care of the medical tourist. Their travel, accommodation, food and going to places of interest needs have fashioned latest job in the field.

DISCUSSION

Medical tourism may be defined as the stipulation of cost effective medical care with due consideration to quality in alliance with tourism industry for foreign patients who need specialized treatment and surgery. It has been seen that where international tourist are migrating in India for cheaper treatment and greener pastures, domestic migration in India is a result of poor health infrastructure, lack of economic opportunity and poor health infrastructure in their own home town. The central reason for increasing importance of medical tourism in India is the low cost of medical treatment. When India is compared with Thailand it is found that India is comparatively low cost as compared to Thailand in case of medical treatment.

This fragment of tourism is increasingly gaining importance and attracting several large corporations, such as pharmaceuticals and industrial companies and several NRIs and foreign investors to invest money in setting up super- specialty hospitals in India. The corporate hospitals here are well equipped with those machineries and technologies, which are required by the medical professionals to tackle the serious diseases and are competent to cater the needs aristocrats and as well as of the budgetary class.

India is a wonderful destination for medical tourism that combines health treatment with visit to some of the most fascinating and awe-inspiring places. Medical tourism is a mounting sector in India. Indian healthcare institutions are increasingly going for International Accreditation of hospitals and clinical laboratories for standardization in order to attract patients from far-off lands

Among the selective countries, India ranks 2nd in number of JCI hospitals, next only to Thailand. There are 63 NABH (National Accreditation Board for Hospitals) approved hospitals in India and 395 hospitals are in the process of accreditation.

The flow of medical tourist to India has benefitted hotel industry too. Many hospitals and resorts have tied-up with top hospitals for providing accommodation for post treatment services. Some surgeries require checkups after one week and hence the patient is required to stay in resorts and also visit some tourist places relaxed at comfort. Star hotels have reported augmented room bookings from medical tourist especially in New Delhi, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Chennai cities. There are also resorts which have reported regular business from medical tourists through tie-up with hospitals. Needless to say that the expansion of medical tourism in India has created many job opportunities in hospital, hotel and travel sectors in order to provide professional services for foreign tourist who are in necessity of specialized services. Physician in the public and corporate sectors view Medical Tourism as “Attracting business through marketing.” It is ‘travel from home to another country for treatment where host country derives financial benefit from there travels’.

The corporate sectors’ physician emphasizes upon reasons for the esteem of medical tourism .It provides opportunities to overseas patient’s to avail the high technical medical facilities in India at low cost through skilled physician who can compete the physician of USA and UK. Quality services are cheaper in India with culturally similar conditions for neighboring countries. Overseas patients come to public hospitals for simpler treatment due to lack of good quality tertiary care in their own countries or long queues .The volume of overseas patient is high and they pay like the private patient. “If Thailand can attract 2 million medical tourist per year, India should attract 20 millions”, said the Chairman of a leading corporate hospital .Another vision is to see India as, “the health care hub of the east”. It will be the underprivileged population in UK that would be sent to India for medical treatment. It is a win-win situation for private hospitals to attract patients and generate employment. India’s hospitality and democratic values add positivity to the business too.

A mounting number of tourist are flocking in large numbers because of superlative medical care, equipments and amenities that India offers. The Government of India has declared treatment of foreign patient's as legal. It is encouraging medical tourism in the country by offering tax breaks and export incentives to participating hospitals. In addition , the Government has cleared medical visas. The review make it clear that what currently known about the effects of medical tourism is minimal and that speculation bound. Medical tourism is a phenomenon born out of steadily globalizing economy, and is an idiom of private for profit health care. Med connect India provides medical travel assistance, high quality affordable medical treatments with worldwide quality principles ,latest advanced medical technologies & price estimates from top hospitals in India. Government of India right from its examination has underlined important role to alternative systems of health care. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare created Department of Indian systems of Medicine and Homeopathy (ISM&H),which was re-named as Department of Ayurveda, provides treatment in Yoga, Unani, Siddha & Homeopathy(AYUSH).There is number of ailments e.g. Arthritis and Rheumatism etc which can be finely treated by these substitute systems of medicines in country. The body of literature focusing on medical tourism as a trade in health services indicates that further research investigating levels of such trade is needed. However, perception of medical tourism are not always positive. In places like the US, which has a high standard of quality, medical tourism is viewed as being risky. In some parts of the world, wider political issues can influence where medical tourist will choose to seek out healthcare. The national government commitment for providing comprehensive health care to the citizens, irrespective of their paying capacity, as part of welfare policies was given up after 30 years of independence with the sixth plan opened up medical care to voluntary and private sectors.

The chief reasons as to why medical tourism would flourish in India include much more lower medical cost for various ailments such as bone marrow transplant bypass surgery, knee surgery and liver transplant as compared to western countries. The other reasons as to why ,India would emerge as a lead hub for admirable medical treatment is because of its strength oh highly qualified medical professionals and even equally higher qualities of availability of nurses. India has over qualified doctors and numbers of qualified nurses. This would present huge opportunity

for medical tourism, and passing of this legislation could lead to even superior adoption of medical tourism as one of the only ways to reduce health care cost. Medical tourism in India offers low cost, or cost effective medical treatments with no waiting list and accessibility of skilled and experienced doctors so medical tourist around the globe are flocking like never before. Now a day's expectation is that Medical Tourism will prolong to grow up at rapid rate of speed and continue contribution medical treatments to tourist at a portion of cost they can get it at home. All the leading hospitals in India offer world-class facilities that can be compared with other hospitals in the world. Health tourism helps in combining physical wellness with spare time and relaxation in order to get a completely rejuvenated experience after the entire process. India has gained the status of being popular tourist destination because of an array of magnificent places, hills towns, beaches and much more. In fact ,Indian corporate hospitals and their state-of-art amenities are equivalent with the hospitals in UK and US.

Indian hospitals do not face problems with technical skills because they are acquired through education and training but difficulty lies in leveraging soft skills of employees. Increasing health awareness coupled with the rise in the standard of living has led to increases in demand for quality healthcare services. Indian health care center is considered one of the largest in terms of in terms of both revenue and workforce environment. Many hospitals in India are accredited by international t institution and are offering world class treatment at that cost which is comparatively40-50% less than any other European country can offer.

With the ever increasing demand for quality and affordable healthcare, India plans to promote its medical tourism industry on wider scale.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The promoters should concentrate more on promotion of Medical Tourism as the awareness about Medical Tourism among people is very low.

- The health care centers can also dispatch membership card to their customers, this will result in retaining of the customers for a longer period of time.

- The promoters can persuade tourist to urge their health centers to others as mouth to mouth information is effective and does not need any money.
- The promoters should guarantee that they cover all kinds of health insurance provided in different nations, and persuade customers to take up the health insurance, as this will simplify operation process.
- The promoters should hold a variety of campaigns in different nations and continents and offer better discount packages.
- Special insurance packages should be advertised.
- There is negative perception about the country because of poor hygiene and sanitation which is needed to be improved.
- Violent marketing and consciousness programs globally.
- Hospitals must target niche markets by country and treatment.
- Hospitals should bunch the cost of treatment and care.
- The medical visa system should be facilitated by the government in a lucid manner .
- The government should vigorously keep on promoting Indian medical tourism.
- It is vital for all hospitals to have International accreditation.

CONCLUSION

Medical tourism is becoming an emerging international business that is steadily increasing its importance. The rapid developments in medical tourism demands have left the policing and legislation behind. There is also a want to develop supporting infrastructure like transport services to facilitate tourism in India. This includes building and promoting the image of India as high quality medical tourism destination by creating and promoting new combination of medical tourism foodstuffs, keeping up the high values of quality treatments at a reasonable price. India is at a valuable position in worldwide opportunities in medical tourism sector. Tax incentives to the services providers, import duty reduction on medical equipment, committees to promote and foster medical tourism are some of the initiatives that can be undertaken. Millions come every year to get treated and enjoy their restorative holidays across India. People from different walks of life cut across the full span of globe come to India to have their treatments

done with peace of mind. India provides world class medical facilities with hospitals and specialized multi specialty health centers providing their proficiency in areas of Cosmetic Surgery, Dental Care, Heart Surgeries, Knee Replacement, Eye Surgeries, Indian traditional treatment like Ayurvedic therapies and much more.

India is considered to be one of the most important country promoting medical tourism with a fine status in medical tourism destinations in the world. The key competitive advantages of medical tourism in India stem from following low cost advantage, strong reputation in advanced healthcare segment and diversity of tourist destinations available in the country .India is a favorable health care destination by setting high health standards in association with the government & the medical council .There is a need for constant endeavor for other states to try their best to nurture themselves in this field and contribute to GDP by providing quality services.

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