

# A Review of Factors Associated with Medical Tourism Industrial Management

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## **Abstract**

The term “Medical tourism” describes the process of travelling outside the residential country for receiving the medical treatment. More specifically, the term is referred to the travelling of the patients from the less developed countries to the developed countries for pursuing the medical treatment which are not available in the country in which they resides. In recent years, the patients are seeking for the healthcare services which can be offered at low prices, so they travel from richer to less developed countries. This paper reviews the growth of medical tourism companies and its factors influencing the management which includes the challenges face by the representatives in the medical tourism companies, maintaining standards of healthcare services, organizing training and certification programs of medical tourism agent, cost and service quality factors.

**Keywords:** *medical tourism, treatment, medical tourism companies, healthcare services, training, cost, quality, medical tourists.*

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

In recent years, the expenses required for the medical treatment offered by the health-care centres are gradually increasing in few countries. People are seeking for various kinds of medical treatment in abroad where the cost of the treatment is low as compared to the country in which they reside. Considering this as an advantage for the economic growth, many countries are planning to set up low costs but highly efficient services along with the help of the trained doctors for the treatment of such “medical tourists”. Through a survey, it was found that the cost of the surgery in India is much lower as compared to that of in US and the quality of the service was also found to be better[1].

Tourist cannot be defined only as the “pleasure seeker” wherein the people are expected

to achieve better health during the vacations through relaxation, exercises and visiting to the spas. This results in the disclosure of a descent trend in the field of tourist industry which can be termed as “medical tourism”. There various new emerging forms of tourism have been introduced in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, wherein number of spa facilities and “taking the water” facilities has been introduced. Later in 19<sup>th</sup> century, therapeutic places were developed along with the hill stations. Further the developed countries introduced “sea bathing” facilities. Various sports facilities have been emerged as a significant part of tourists experience for the pleasure of the tourists. Some people are also travel across the various counties in search of “Yoga” and “meditation”. This leads to the rise of “medical tourism”, wherein the tourism is found to be an integral part of the medical interventions[2].

“Niche tourism” is a descent form of tourism which has been introduced in the tourist industry in early decades. Some of the researchers have been started describing this term as “Health-care” tourism to demonstrate all forms of tourism related to the health. Later it was named as “medical tourism”.

“Medical tourism” is an integral form of “Niche tourism”, wherein people used to travel across the other countries for receiving the medical care, especially, for receiving dental, surgical and medical care. There has been significant growth in the tourism industries because of the “medical tourism” as the medical treatments available in the developed and rich countries are very expensive and the patients seeking for the surgery has to wait for long time for their turn in the health-care centres. So there is a need of relatively affordable travelling facilities and favourable economic exchange rates. Internet plays a vital role in the “medical tourism” along with the new organizations which acts as a broker in between the patient and the hospital networks. There has been a significant growth in the health-care systems due to the innovative technologies discovered in the medical treatment procedures along with the well conscious marketing strategies of the health-care associated with the tourism. The health-care systems belonging to the private sector are emerging more than that of the public sectors due to rapid increase in the population of the rich countries like US.

There exists some new emerging demands by the people for cosmetic surgeries comprising of an elective procedures such as liposuction, rhinoplasty, LASIK eye surgery, breast enhancement or reduction, removal of tattoos, etc. Among all kinds of the surgeries, dental surgery has been proved to be the most demanding treatment by the medical tourists as this type of surgery has not been covered by insurance in US and Australia. But in Asia, “the unlikely child of new global realities: the fallout of terrorism, the Asian

economic downturn, internet access to price information and the globalisation of the health-care services”[3].

#### *Challenges faced by medical tourism:*

The major challenge is to convince the medical tourist that the available medical care which they are going to provide is cheaper and has a better quality of service as compared to the medical care facilities available in the residential country of that particular medical tourist. As many other countries claimed that, the country which provides cheaper medical care are inadequate. The German radio station has made a statement over India, “India is not exactly known for health and hygiene”, even though the India is not looking for any trade of its tourists industry in the German market. Such different views regarding the inadequacy have been changed in this era[4].

The role of advertisements has also proved to be important in the “medical tourism” which focus on the innovative technologies used in the treatment, service quality reliability, and overseas training. Advertisements in various magazines, especially in the aeroplanes that indicates the results of the treatment provided by their health-care centres, wherein the results shows the photographs captured before and after the medical treatment. The advanced health-care centres in Mauritius has proved to be one of the best medial health-care centres in the world, wherein an international medical team comprising of a Plastic surgeon, a Laureate winning doctor and an anaesthetist. This health-care centre follow the set-up of European standards and is approved by “Ministry of health” which comprises of new innovative technologies.

#### *Professional standards of health-care services for marketing:*

The patients should be aware about the medical treatments which they are acquiring outside their residential country through medical

tourism, wherein the treatments should fall under the professional standards of care of the jurisdiction within which the agencies associated with the medical tourism are located. Such medical tourism industries should where the treatment doesn't fall within the professional standards and which are not approved by the regulatory bodies of that particular country should be banned and should not be given any permit to disclose their advertisements[5]. A case related to this has been observed, wherein the "stem cell treatments" were not approved by the association of Food and pharmacy in USA and the medical tourism industries situated in India, Japan and China were not allowed to promote any advertisements regarding this treatment. The heads of the states should pay attention towards the medical tourism industries along with the treatments procedures carried out there in the health-care centre so it should provide no harm to the medical tourists. The management of "International health services" should be dependent on "evidence-based medicines" which falls under the professional standards of the treatment, and medical equipment[6].

#### *Training and certification programs of the agents:*

The agents acting as a broker in between the medical tourism industry and the health-care centres should be well trained. Certain training programs should be organized for the medical tourism agents so that they can deliver their part of service in the medical tourism in appropriate manner. The medical tourism industries should comply with the legal standards to protect the health and the financial interests of the medical tourists. The standard certification for the medical tourism agent should be approved by federal, state or provincial legislation. This kind of standard certification cannot be published by the tourism industries or any kind of tourism business association itself. The representatives in the medical tourism industry should be evaluated by the authorized agencies to provide training and

certification. The rights of dealing with the clients of medical tourism industries are only provided to the certified representatives. There has been organized a team for accreditation review, where they ensure that the employees working in the medical tourism industries underwent proper training and certification programs. Expecting the cooperation of the medical representatives for acquiring the training and certification programs will reduce the risks associated with the dealing of client[7].

#### *Repayments for the loss:*

In some cases, the representatives in the medical tourism company fails to rely on the contract made with the client, wherein they couldn't provide the available facilities to the client as mentioned in the contract. So, in this situation, to cover the loss of the clients, the payment is refunded. Therefore medical tourism industries and travel agencies must contribute compensation funds every year. This funds can be very useful when the medical tourism industries cease operating suddenly.

#### *Cost and Service Quality factors in Medical tourism:*

Cost is the major factor which matters a lot in the process of "Medical tourism" for an individual those who are interested in the health-care services in abroad. The cost of the medical treatment services in US are very expensive, insurance companies and the employers' opinion regarding the medical tourism is not considerable. Many nations in the world are seeking for the financial benefits aroused from the market, so they provide premium health-care services at reasonably lower rate. The main reason behind the capability of nations of providing the medical services at lowest possible prices is directly related to the economic status of the country. The direct correlation with per capita gross domestic product of the country has been monitored which is termed as intermediary for income levels. As a

result, surgery prices are from 20% to 60 % lower in the countries which are promoting medical tourism as compared to the US[8].

Technical and serviceable quality are the two major aspects of the service quality in the medical service sector. Technical quality relates to the technical equipment used for diagnosing the patient and the service quality is related to the quality of services offered at the healthcare sectors which comprises of services of staffs, nurses and doctors offered to the patients in the clinic. The service quality in the medical tourism industry is an important aspect which results in fetching more number of customers.

There are many type of treatment used for diagnosis of different kinds of diseases. The availability of this treatment represents an important factor in implementing the process of medical tourism. Most frequent medical procedures that patient undergo during trips of medical tourism are orthopaedic surgery, cardiac surgery, organ transplantation, dentistry and cosmetic surgery.

There exists numerous kinds of medical services which can be acquired by medical tourism, starting from the significant treatments used for critical treatments to the different kinds of traditional and alternative treatments. The reproductive outsourcing of this types of services are increasing rapidly, which comprises the activity of travelling outside the residential country to pursue in surrogate pregnancy, “in vitro fertilization” and other reproductive technology frameworks.

Easy accessibility of these kind of services is also one of the considerable factor which is responsible for the growth of medical tourism. An appropriate technology should be available in the country for the treatment of the disease. Lack of accessibility of this technology can insist the people to move towards medical tourism[9].

## II. LITERATURE SURVEY

The literature study provides a brief description of the current analysis and research around the medical tourism, and its impact on the Australians. As patients are seeking for the medical care outside their residential countries, especially in south-east Asia for the cosmetic surgery and the dental treatment which results in medico-legal and insurance issues along with the concerns regarding maintain the records of the patients which comprises of the travel health advice, regular check-up advice and many more[10].As discussed herein, the study includes an overview and history of the medical tourism, wherein the industry analysis has been recorded, the media coverages and advertisements suggests the patient to visit abroad for the medical treatment by travelling a long distance, but most of the medical tourism is across nearby borders of Europe, the middle class Europeans can't afford to travel that much of distance for the medical treatment. So the significant factors regarding this issue have been discussed in this research paper [11].

Many popular icons of their respective countries along with the government are promoting for the medical tourist industry in the South-east Asia, but its several impacts on the health-care system has been not studied carefully, so this paper explain the significant factors that impact that affects the growth of medical tourism by discussing various cases of Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore [12]. The literature survey states the issues aroused on health and medical tourism, wherein the interrelationship between different sectors of medical tourism and health including the health-care tourism, dental tourism, abortion tourism, transplant tourism and xeno-tourism have been identified. This relates with the concept of maintaining health and dealing with the key factors that results in developing the diseases[13].



### III. CONCLUSION

It has been conclude that to acquire a profitable share from the market in the medical tourism industry , the number of private medical clinics must be increased in the countries were the medical tourist visits more often. Providing the better quality of treatment in low costs proved to be beneficial for the country's economic growth, as more number of medical tourists will visit for the medical treatment and will stay even after completion of the surgery for experiencing the culture of the country and performing holiday activities in the country in which they are pursuing the medical treatment. So they will visit many popular tourist places, buy the products and so on. The issues generated while facing the client can be reduced by providing proper training and certification programs for the representatives in the medical tourism industries. It has been observed that there is need to maintain the professional standards in the treatment procedure to avoid the risk of causing harm to the patient while pursuing the medical treatment. Cost and Quality service factors has been proved to major aspects in the medical tourism activities that should be managed in an appropriate manner.

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