

MEDICAL TOURISM IN INDIA: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

Traveling to another country in order to receive any kind of medical facilities, called medical tourism. India is emerging as an important destination for world class medical treatment. The ancient Indian system of medicine which incorporates Yoga, Ayurveda, Unani, Sidha, Naturopathy and other traditional healing treatments are very unique and exotic. This medical expertise coupled with Allopathic and other modern methods become are new focused segment to project India as a “Global Healing Destination”. People from developed countries like USA and UK or other European countries travel to developing countries such as India for treatment because India offers some of the cheapest pricing options of treatment. Offers a good holiday there are no waiting lists queues to stand in. The doctors are comparable to anyone in the world and finally language doesn't pose a problem as most of the people speak English.

Keywords: Medical Tourism, Health and Wellness, Ayurveda, Cost analysis.

Introduction

Medical Tourism is one of the recently emerging areas of modern tourism. It defined as a cost effective person health care treatment associated with tourism industry for needing patients surgical as well as other specialized treatments. This concept is being developed by both healthcare sector and tourism industry. India become a favourable destination in the world for vacationing

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covering a broad range of medical services. In India it is a combination of relaxation, fun, recreation along with healthcare and wellness due to its very low cost of treatment. Medical Tourism is a fast growing segment of tourism industry in India. The highly skilled doctors and latest technology made India as an important destination for medical tourism. The natural and cultural resources available here in India would also help to promote tourism. The health and medical tourists are also being attracted by those.

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 2012. India is quickly becoming a hub for medical tourists seeking quality healthcare at an affordable cost. Approx 450, 000 foreigners sought medical treatment in India last year. The most common treatments sought are heart surgery, Knee replacement, hip transplant, cosmetic surgery and dental care. A new type of revenue also generate from this segment. As the bulk of this type of new money will be coming from the private healthcare system encouraged investment in healthcare industry by the government. 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. The leading private hospital groups in this sector are Wockhardt, Fortis Healthcare, Apollo Group, which run a total of 26 hospitals across the country. Accreditation and compliance with quality expectations are important since they provide patients with confidence that the services are meeting international standards. Reduced costs, access to the latest medical technology, growing compliance to international quality standards and ease of communication all work towards India's advantage. The government is also keen to promote healthcare tourism and cleared all type of medical visas.

Research Methodology

Medical Tourism is not a new concept, and many studies have been done in this field. This research is based on secondary data which has been collected from various journals, websites (source mentioned in references) and books available.

Cost Comparisons between US, UK and India

Significant cost difference exist between US, UK and India when it comes to medical treatment. India is not only cheaper but the waiting time is also almost nil. The cost of major diseases like surgery costs nearby 10% of US & UK.

Procedure	US (\$) approx	UK (\$) approx	India (\$) approx
Heart Bypass	\$ 130, 000	\$100, 000	\$ 10, 000
Heart Surgery	\$ 160, 000	\$43, 000	\$ 9, 000
Angioplasty	\$ 57, 000	\$63, 000	\$ 11, 000

Hip Replacement	\$ 43, 000	\$48, 000	\$ 9, 000
Knee Replacement	\$ 40, 000	\$52, 000	\$ 8, 500
Spinal Fusion	\$ 60, 000	\$61, 500	\$ 5, 500

Source: (<http://www.indianmedicaltourism.co.in/cost-comparison.html>)

India is a leading player in the healthcare facilitation industry, with its wide range of medical facilities. There are a lot of advantages of coming to India for treatment. Some of the advantages are:

Advantages of Medical Treatment in India

- Internationally accredited medical facilities using the latest technologies.
- Highly skilled physician/surgeons and well trend hospital support staff.
- The cost of medical treatment in India is only 10-20% of the total cost of US & UK.
- No waiting time for surgical procedures.
- Language is not a problem as most people speak English.
- Treatment can easily be combined with holiday/recreational trip.
- Online assistance to the patients.

History of Medical Tourism

History of tourism for medical purpose is actually thousands of years old in world. In India also people have travelled to different places for treatments. The methods of treating diseases have changed rapidly over a period of time. The International healthcare market has grown very high in the late 19th century. Wealthy people from less developed parts of the world travelled to European countries for advanced medical treatments. But in the recent times the situation is different. Today patients travel from high developed countries to less developed countries for treatment. The main reason for the patients' shift from developed countries are long waiting list in European and other developed countries. Relatively the cost of treatment is also very less. Some complex procedures like surrogate procedures are easily available in developing countries also attracts medical tourists. Some medical tourists especially from Europe also opt India for treatment, who has no health insurance or inadequate health service coverage. The other group pursuing medical tourism are people seeking dental reconstruction, cosmetic surgery, fertility treatment, gender reassignment procedures. These type of treatments are not covered by medical insurance.

India is well renowned place for ancient alternative therapies like Yoga, Ayurveda, meditation, Naturopathy, Massage treatment and other traditional healing treatments. In India medical tourist can opt for the ultra modern as well as the traditional or natural treatment option available to them. India is an exotic tourist destination offering everything from beaches, quaint villages,

mountains, cosmopolitan cities and pilgrimages to suit everyone. Richest culture and history, India has proved to be an oasis in the modern world, providing complete health and well being.

MAJOR HEALTH CARE CENTRES IN INDIA

Wockhardt Hospitals

Wockhardt Ltd. The most renowned healthcare centre in India, has associated with Harvard Medical International, USA. As associated hospitals of Harvard Medical International, USA in India Wockhardt hospitals benefit from the extensive learning and experience of Harvard Medical School and its affiliated institutions world wide. This association helps Wockhardt Hospitals to stay at the forefront of medical technology and techniques.

Wockhardt Hospitals Group has established a chain of super specialty hospitals at Mumbai, Hyderabad, Goa, Bangalore, Kolkata and Nagpur. With latest technology, multi-disciplinary capability, state of the art facilities, world class infrastructure and excellent patient care ambience and processes, Wockhardt Hospitals is poised to become the most advanced and progressive healthcare institution in this part of the world. Wockhardt Hospital, Mumbai, has become the first multi-specialty hospital in South Asia to achieve accreditation from Joint Commission International (JCI), USA. JCI is the gold standard in global healthcare standards. With this, Wockhardt Hospitals joins an exclusive group of 71 hospitals worldwide, which have cleared JCI's stringent clinical quality standards. JCI is the international arm of the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, which evaluates quality standards of US hospitals.

Wockhardt Hospital and Kidney Institute

The Wockhardt Hospital and Kidney Institute in Kolkata is part of premier chain of Wockhardt Hospitals and an offshoot hospital of Harvard Medical International of USA, has been established in 1988. It is the first and the only dedicated super specialty Kidney Hospital in Eastern India. Over the years, it has become as the only hospital that serves as a solution for all kind of Urology and Nephrology disorders. It has emerged as a only destination for world class clinical work in Urology and Nephrology as well as relevant academic and research work in this field.

Max Health Care, New Delhi

Max Health Care group is the well renowned leading chain of hospitals in India, has associated with Max India Ltd. Max India Ltd. established in 1985, is a public limited company listed in BSE and NSE of India with more than 37, 000 shareholders. The institute has established a chain of multi specialty hospitals with highest standards of medical and service excellence, patient care, scientific and medical education in Delhi, NCR and neighbouring Punjab region, providing best health care services in more than 30 disciplines. The company provides patient services in neurophthalmology, internal medicine, general surgery, urology, nephrology,

gastroenterology, mental health and behavioral sciences, rehabilitative services, pulmonology, electrophysiology, neurosciences, orthopedics, gynecology including nuclear medicine and cardiac imaging. Max Healthcare has a base of over 1800 leading doctors, 5900 employees and over 1.4 million patients, with number of beds growing to over 2000 by the end of Year 2012. With a team of highly qualified and trained doctors, nurses and patient care personnel Max Health Care provide the highest standards of care. Max Health Care has collaboration with Singapore General Hospital in the areas of medical practices, nursing, paramedical, research and training.

Apollo Hospitals

The Apollo Hospitals Group is a major chain of hospitals based in Chennai, India. It was founded by Dr Prathap C. Reddy in 1983. Apollo is a leading private healthcare provider not only in India, but in Asia. It has established a network of super specialty hospitals in many Asian countries like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Ghana, Nigeria, Republic of Mauritius, Qatar, Oman and Kuwait and across the country in all the major cosmopolitan cities Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Bilaspur, Madurai, Kakinada, Lavasa, Mysore, Vishakapatnam, Ludhiana etc. Apollo is one of the most recognized hospital chain in the continent. It is the first and the only Indian hospital to be recognized by Joint Commission International (JCI), USA. The Apollo Hospital, Hyderabad was the first in the world, outside the US, to receive JCI's Disease- or Condition-Specific Care (DCSC) Certification in addition to general accreditation for its Acute Stroke treatment in 2006. Now one of Asia's largest private healthcare groups, Apollo began in 1983 as a 150-bed hospital. Today Apollo Hospitals Group includes 54 hospitals in India and overseas, has a total bed capacity of 8,700, offers 55 medical specialties, and annually treats more than 255,000 inpatients and 2.2 million outpatients. Apollo also launched Asia's first operational health city at Hyderabad in 2007, consists of a medical college, multiple super-speciality hospitals, a gym and various other health services. Apollo has seven JCI-accredited hospitals, four of which welcome an especially high volume of international patients. They treat more than 50,000 international patients from 55 countries every year.

Apollo Hospitals, Dhaka is the only 'JCI Accredited' 450-bed multi-disciplinary super-specialty tertiary care hospital in Bangladesh, providing comprehensive health care with the latest medical, surgical and diagnostic facilities. The success of Apollo Hospitals has made it the topic for Harvard Business School case study.

Fortis Health Care, Delhi

Fortis Health Care Limited, Delhi is a well established, leading chain of super specialty hospitals. It is a leading healthcare delivery provider not in India, but in Asia Pacific also. It has established a network of super specialty hospitals in Australia, Canada, Dubai, Hong Kong, Mauritius, New Zealand, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Nepal, India and Vietnam with 75 hospitals, 12,000 beds, 600 primary care centres, 191 day care specialty centres, 230 diagnostic centres and more than 23,000 employees. In India Fortis Health Care comprises a network of 32

hospitals in 12 states. To provide a highly specialized and dedicated service to the international patients, 'Fortis Healthcare International Patients Service Centre' had been created. The medical value that they bring to their services is because of the Fortis Healthcare team of expert doctors (mostly western trained) supported by highly skilled nursing professionals, technicians and state of the art medical equipment at their command. Over the past decade, Fortis has transformed itself to become one of the fastest growing integrated healthcare delivery networks in the Asia-Pacific region. Its special brand of healthcare beyond borders spans 11 countries, many of which represent the fastest-growing healthcare delivery markets in the world.

Growing Healthcare Infrastructure

The Indian healthcare industry is seen to be growing at a rapid pace and is expected to become a US\$280 billion industry by 2020. The Indian healthcare market was estimated at US\$35 billion in 2007 and is expected to reach over US\$70 billion by 2012 and US\$145 billion by 2017. According to the Investment Commission of India the healthcare sector has experienced phenomenal growth of 12 per cent per annum in the last 4 years. Rising income levels and a growing elderly population are all factors that are driving this growth. In addition, changing demographics, disease profiles and the shift from chronic to lifestyle diseases in the country has led to increased spending on healthcare delivery. Even so, the vast majority of the country suffers from a poor standard of healthcare infrastructure which has not kept up with the growing economy. Despite having centers of excellence in healthcare delivery, these facilities are limited and are inadequate in meeting the current healthcare demands. Nearly one million Indians die every year due to inadequate healthcare facilities and 700 million people have no access to specialist care and 80% of specialists live in urban areas. In order to meet manpower shortages and reach world standards India would require investments of up to \$20 billion over the next 5 years. Forty per cent of the primary health centers in India are understaffed. According to WHO statistics there are over 250 medical colleges in the modern system of medicine and over 400 in the Indian system of medicine and homeopathy (ISM&H). India produces over 250,000 doctors annually in the modern system of medicine and a similar number of ISM&H practitioners, nurses and Para professionals. Better policy regulations and the establishment of public private partnerships are possible solutions to the problem of manpower shortage. India faces a huge need gap in terms of availability of number of hospital beds per 1000 population. With a world average of 3.96 hospital beds per 1000 population India stands just a little over 0.7 hospital beds per 1000 population. Moreover, India faces a shortage of doctors, nurses and paramedics that are needed to propel the growing healthcare industry.

India is now looking at establishing academic medical centers (AMCs) for the delivery of higher quality care with leading examples of The Manipal Group & All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) already in place. As incomes rise and the number of available financing options in terms of health insurance policies increase, consumers become more and more engaged in making informed decisions about their health and are well aware of the costs associated with

those decisions. In order to remain competitive, healthcare providers are now not only looking at improving operational efficiency but are also looking at ways of enhancing patient experience overall. India has approximately 600, 000 allopathic doctors registered to practice medicine. This number however, is higher than the actual number practicing because it includes doctors who have immigrated to other countries as well as doctors who have died. India licenses 18, 000 new doctors a year

Opportunities and Challenges for Medical Tourism in India

India's cost effective and efficient healthcare sector has made it a favored destination for medical tourism. The Indian government promotes medical tourism in India. India's Former Health Minister Mr. Anbumani Ramadoss says – “country's cost effective and efficient medical sector have made it a favored destination for healthcare”. He said this while releasing the Incredible India Brochure on Medical Tourism. The ancient Indian system of medicine like Ayurveda, Yoga, Panchakarma, Rejuvenation therapy are among the most ancient system of medical treatment of the world.

The south Indian state Kerala has developed Health and Tourism as a product for the promotion of tourism in Kerala. In Kerala most of the hotels and resorts are coming up with the spas and Ayurveda centres to promote ancient Indian system of medicine. The state has strongly focused on Ayurveda and its wide range of treatments and medicine as well as modern medical treatment. Kerala is a very lucrative destination for those people, wanting to undergo treatment with Ayurveda of certain medical problems who do not need immediate emergency treatment. Virtually Kerala and Ayurveda become synonymous with each other.

India has an international reputation of being a knowledge-based economy. The available talent base of over 7.5 lakh registered doctors and 10.7 lakh registered nursing professionals, with this India can provide best medical healthcare of international standard at comparatively low cost. India offers high tech cardiac, paediatric, neuro, dental and orthopaedic surgical services and the cost of most surgical procedures are almost one-tenth of the developed countries. There is no waiting period of elective surgery also. As we know medical tourism does not cater emergency services, mostly provided services are knee joint replacement, hip replacement, bone marrow transplant, bypass surgery, cosmetic surgery etc. India is recognized as the cradle for test tube babies and popular destination for surrogacy services. India's pharma sector has done commendable work in bringing low-cost essential drugs to the market, including international markets.

The National Health Policy was endorsed by the Parliament of India in 1983 and updated in 2002. However, the government sector is understaffed and underfinanced; poor services at state-run hospitals force many people to visit private medical practitioners. Government hospitals, some of which are among the best hospitals in India, provide treatment at taxpayer expense. Most essential drugs are offered free of charge in these hospitals. Government hospitals provide treatment either free or at minimal charges. For example, an outpatient card at AIIMS (one of

the best hospitals in India) costs a onetime fee of rupees 10 (around 20 cents US) and thereafter outpatient medical advice is free. In-hospital treatment costs depend on financial condition of the patient and facilities utilized by him but are usually much less than the private sector. For instance, a patient is waived treatment costs if he is below poverty line. Another patient may seek for an air-conditioned room if he is willing to pay extra for it. The charges for basic in-hospital treatment and investigations are much less compared to the private sector.

The biggest challenge is to position India as a favorable health care destination for all by setting high standards for ourselves, and work in association with the government and the medical council and also see to it that all hospitals keep up to those standards. There is a need to reduce inequalities, imbalances that exist between two region, countries, cities and different socioeconomic groups to provide good quality and affordable healthcare for all. Another biggest challenge pertains to the frequency of international flight service available to and from India. To promote healthcare tourism, we should have more frequent direct flights in and out of India particularly connecting potential potential destination. The aviation ministry need to work more closely to clear these hurdles. According to joint secretary in the ministry Dr. Vishwas Mehta's presentation the Medical Council of India has 7.5 lakh doctors registered under it, but Union health ministry's scrutiny has found that two lakh of the registered doctors aren't working anymore. Of the 10.7 lakh registered nurses, six lakh don't exist. At present, there is only one doctor for every 2,000 population. The target is to have one doctor for every 1,000 population, the international nurse to doctor ratio is 3:1, in India it stands at 5:1. Although India remained a major supplier of doctors and nurses to the developed countries over the years, but the domestic scenario looked bleak with the country ranking 67th among the developing nations in doctor-population ratio. The government need to work for it.

The minister for Tourism and Culture, emphasized that there is a need to promote India as the new emerging Medical Value Travel destination abroad. She said, the private and public hospitals need to synergize their efforts to promote India as the healthcare destination worldwide and the healthcare industry will also have to standardize their processes and make its functioning more transparent and accountable.

Conclusion

Medical Tourism is becoming a very popular form of tourism in the contemporary society. Good number of tourists are attracted to country like India, where they can have various advantages like world class services at affordable cost, no waiting period, English speaking staff and highly specialized doctors and nursing staff. In India many private hospitals use world class equipments and are committed to meet the rigorous international standards of hospitals. Many ancient therapies of India are gaining popularity because of their long lasting positive effect with no side effect. Lots of tourists come to India to have the Ayurvedic treatment of their sufferings and south Indian state Kerala engaged in providing ancient therapies like ayurvedic treatment and rejuvenating therapies. These ancient therapies are able to attract tourists from all over the

world. The government need to work little more for the improvement in infrastructural facilities and effective tie-ups between different hospitals and travel agencies to promote medical tourism.

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