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Scope and Management of Medical Tourism in India

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ABSTRACT

Healthcare, like food and shelter, is a basic need of Humanity. Given the potential India holds as a healthcare destination, the healthcare tourism sector can be a major source of foreign exchange earning for the country. India's healthcare sector has made impressive strides in recent years and the country is increasingly projected as a 'healthcare hub'. Several features have positioned India as an ideal healthcare destination, like cost effective healthcare solutions, availability of skilled healthcare professionals, reputation for successful treatment in advanced healthcare segments, increasing popularity of India's traditional wellness systems and rapid strides made in information technology. The sector is witnessing a 'reverse brain-drain' trend, with increasing number of specialists, who have been practicing abroad, showing keen interest to come back and practice in India. Such developments further enhance the potential of India as a 'healthcare hub' of the world. People travel to India for availing healthcare services for diverse reasons. While healthcare tourists from United States are primarily reported to be traveling to India, as the cost of getting treatment in home country is expensive, travelers from Europe are reported to be seeking healthcare services in India due to the complexity of availing the healthcare services in their home country. Some of the tourists from West Asia and Africa region travel to India due to affordability of treatment and quality of services rendered. A section of tourists from different parts of the world travel to India for traditional healthcare services, such as Ayurveda and Yoga.

Key word: Medical tourism, India, Healthcare.

INTRODUCTION

India is a good location to receive medical treatments and considered a leader in promoting medical tourism. At an approximate growth of 30% each year, studies conducted by government and private sectors in India estimate that medical tourism could bring between \$1-\$2 billion US into India by 2012.

Objectives

India is in the process of becoming the "Global Health Destination". So it is very important to consider some point like a comparative study of the participation of medical tourists from different countries, factors that drive it in India, marketing efforts and success, identify the problems and solution for improvement.

Discussion

India is a perfect destination for medical tourism that combines health treatment with visit to some of the most alluring and awe-inspiring places of the world. A growing number of tourists are flocking in large numbers because of the superlative medical care, equipments and facilities that India offers.

Attraction in India

- Foremost is the cost factor. The medical costs in India are one-tenth of the costs in western countries. For instance, a heart surgery costs \$6,000 in India as against \$30,000 in the US. Similarly, a bone marrow transplant costs \$26,000 in India as compared to \$ 2, 50,000 in the US.
- Secondly, foreign patients through Indian hospitals to pass up the long waiting lists and queues in their native countries. Indian hospitals provide immediate attention to patients rather than asking them to wait for several months like in most western countries. Further, foreign patients need not tackle insurance and national medical systems in India as they have to in their native lands.
- India offers the best treatments in modern medicine and in every medical division such as cardiology, orthopedic surgery, eye care, gynecology, cosmetic surgery and dental surgery. It also provides traditional methods of treatment such as Ayurveda, Homeopathy, Naturopathy and Yoga.
- India's private hospitals have gained international recognition for their state-of-the-art facilities and diagnostic centers besides unsurpassed skills. Their technology and procedures are on par with hospitals in developed nations.
- Foreign patients can get package deals including flights, transfers, hotels, treatment and post-operative vacation for their medical visits to India.
- Many foreign patients prefer to combine their leisure and relaxation visits to India with healthcare.
- The Government of India has declared that treating of foreign patients is 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.

Participating Department:

The chief cities attracting foreign patients to India are Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Chennai. Similarly, the specialist hospitals excelling in the medical tourism industry in the country are:

- Escorts Heart Institute and Research Centre Limited, New Delhi
- All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi
- Manipal Heart Foundation, Bangalore
- B. M. Birla Heart Research Centre, Kolkata
- Breach Candy Hospital, Mumbai etc.

CONCLUSION

The medical tourism industry in India is presently earning revenues of \$333 million. Encouraged by the incredible pace of growth exhibited by the industry, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and McKinsey have predicted that the industry will grow to earn additional revenue of \$2.2 billion by 2012.

To provide for brighter prospects for the industry, the hospitals can also acquire international accreditation, integrate traditional and clinical treatments and offer end-to-end value added services by tying up with tour operators, airline carriers and hotel companies. Hospitals can also allow foreign patients to pay through credit and ensure proper support services to foreign patients after they return to their native countries.

Lastly, the Government of India can also reinforce its support through quick visa processing, improved flight connectivity and infrastructure development.

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