

AN ANALYSIS OF MEDICAL TOURISM WITH REFERENCE TO INDIAN SCENARIO

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Abstract:

India is emerging as an important destination for health and contributing a lot towards the social economical development of the society by increasing employment opportunities and an increase in foreign exchange earnings and in the bargain helping in uplifting the living standards. India is one of the important destinations in the medical tourism industry. Today Indian hospitals are well equipped with the latest technology and houses highly qualified and experienced staff that can provide timely and quality medical treatment to patients. The present paper highlights the potential of Medical Tourism industry in India. For analyzing the potential and significance of medical tourism in India, the data has been gathered through secondary sources which include Books, Magazines, Journals, E-Journals and websites etc. After analyzing all the facts it can be concluded that India is in an advantageous position to tap the global opportunities in the medical tourism sector. Medical Tourism will also get a push with the right marketing strategies adopted by the country and the hospitals,. It is not only done by the developed country but also in the developing countries. India is one of the important destinations in the medical tourism industry.

Keywords—Medical Tourism, Medical Tourist Management, Medical Care, Marketing strategies

Introduction:

Medical tourism is becoming a popular option for tourists across the globe. It consists of primarily and predominantly biomedical procedures, combined with travel and tourism. The term medical tourism has been coined by travel companies and the advertising industry to describe the increasingly growing practice of travelling across international borders to obtain efficient and effective medical care. Various countries like Thailand, Malaysia, India, etc are promoting medical tourism aggressively. The key competitive advantage of India in medical tourism arises from the following: low cost advantage, strong reputation in the advanced healthcare segment (cardiovascular surgery, organ transplants, eye surgery etc.) and the diversity of tourist destinations available in the country. The key concerns facing the industry include: absence of government initiative, lack of a coordinated effort to promote the industry, no accreditation mechanism for hospitals and the lack of uniform pricing policies and standards across hospitals.

Medical tourism or health care tourism is fast growing multibillion-dollar industry around the world. It is an economic activity that implies trade in services and represents the blending of two of the largest world industries: medicine and tourism. The paper identifies the strengths of India's medical tourism service providers and points at a number of issues that may reduce the growth opportunity of this industry.

Concept:

The concept of Medical Tourism is not new. Thousand of years back, as history goes, pilgrims from Greece traveled to Saronic Gulf Epidauria. The place is a sanctuary of the healing God Asclepius. Travel was not that easy at that time, but still people undertook the adventures trip to the place to get themselves or their dear ones cured from the unpopular and unknown diseases. Today, people look at the world as a single borderless entity. Development in technology coupled with the growing economic power provides opportunities for every individual to fulfill their needs and desire.

Objectives of the study:

This research work explores opportunities, discusses its key challenges and designing the suitable strategies for developing medical tourism in India. It is based on a review of the literature, including published research, web sites, newspapers, and the travel and tourism magazines that carry medical tourism related information. This helps to design the strategies being used for promoting medical tourism in India. This research work also strives to understand why some developing countries like India are more successful in promoting medical tourism than others. In other words, it also emphasizes over the competitive advantages of India over other countries.

Health care in developed countries:

Mike Adams, the author of "Take Back your Health Power" is of the opinion that the US system of 'sick care' is an economic and health disaster. The article in News Target.com, Sep. 21, 2006 issue highlights that the US health care system is dangerous compared with two dozen industrialized nations. The study examined 37 national indicators of health outcomes and identified US in the failing grade. Symptoms of the ailing system in USA are: Overtaxed, understaffed work force, and declining number of facilities like emergency departments. The struggle in overcoming these obstacles has a say on the quality of healthcare offered by the hospitals. This ultimately results in best services not being offered.

Medical Tourism:

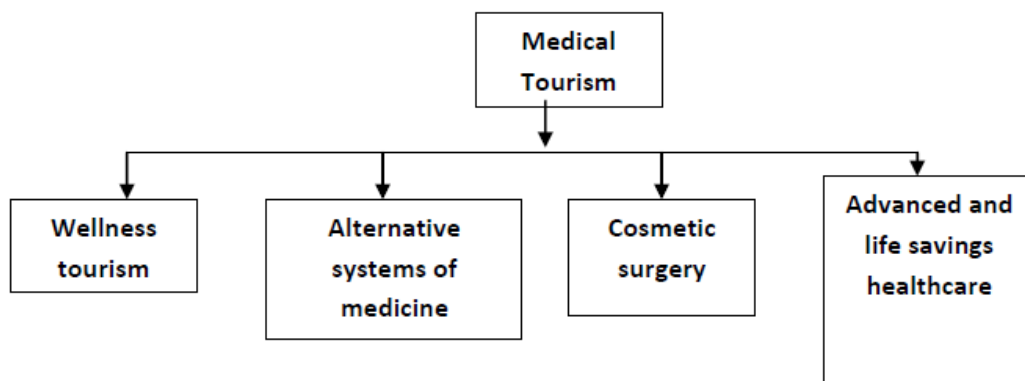
Many institutions across the world provide different definitions on medical tourism. To quote a few:

- The phenomenon of leaving the country to find offshore location to access quality medical care and surgical procedure is called medical tourism - New Target.com, Apr. 21, 2015.
- The industry catering to patients seeking care outside of their home region - Andrew N. Garman et.al., ACHE Congress in Chicago, Mar. 13, 2018.

Medical Tourism refers, in general, to patients going to a different country for either an urgent or selective medical procedure or treatment. The industry is at the blooming stage and estimated at \$20 billion and expected to get doubled in another two years time.

It is quoted in the magazine CHATELAINE, Nov.2016 issue that Canadians are sick of languishing on waiting list for getting medical care at home. They are flocking to exotic destinations for cheap medical treatment, coupled with a tropical vacation. It further adds that India, one of the top destinations for medical care, will surpass US\$ 2 billion by 2022. Pressures of graying Canadian population, who are affected by the heart, knee and hip diseases, would like to get themselves attended with a personal touch.

Csmonitor.com on Aug. 16, 2016, brings out the experience of an American, Carl Gerret, who underwent two operations in India at the cost of US \$ 20,000, whereas it would have costed him US\$100,000 if carried out in USA. Cost savings is becoming an attraction for people from developed countries to move out of their country for treatment.



Destination India:

Since time immemorial, India has been the centre of academic excellence. The ancient universities like Nalanda speak volumes. It has the largest Intellectual bank of world, including healthcare. Estimated 20,000 to 40,000 doctors and paramedical professionals are churned out of the Indian educational system.

Approximated 150,000 patients arrive in India every year and it is expected to grow at 15 percent every year; whereas the medical tourism market in India is expected to grow at the rate of 30 percent annually. According to the consultancy firm, Mc Kinsey, the medical tourism market is expected to generate a revenue of US\$2 billion by 2022.

According to a CII estimate India is likely to become the top medical tourism destination.

The advantage India posses are:

- Well trained health practitioners
- Large population of good English speaking doctors and paramedical staff.
- Availability of super specialty centres.
- Availability of latest, technologically advanced diagnostic centres
- Provides a good mix of allopathic and alternative system of medicine.
- Provision of 'M' or Medical Visas.
- Infrastructure up gradation
- The medical treatment available in developed countries is only 'allopathy'. It is not sufficient to handle drug resistant diseases and / or new type of diseases like HIV / AIDS, Hepatitis, Cancer and so on. The traditional medical intervention methods like Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani provide greater relief to the foreign patients, which is not available in their countries. Yoga, meditation, spiritualization joins the traditional methods of treatment to get over the diseases psychologically and physiologically. The CII observes that 'India offers a unique basket of services to an individual that is difficult to match by other country'.
- Heritage monuments and Archeological sites attract medical tourist towards India. World heritage sites like Taj Mahal, Ajanta, Ellora, Khajuraho, Mahabalipuram, Bhimbetika rock paintings; Winter sports sites in Gulmarg, Auli; Buddhist sites Shravasti, Kushinagar Cultural / Festival tourism in Ladekh, Khajuraho, Allanganallore, Ancient and religions places like Varanasi, Udaipur, Rameshwaram are few to mention.

Indian Medical Tourism Industry (US\$ billion) 2012-2018

| Year | In US\$ billion |
|------|-----------------|
| 2012 | 2.0 |
| 2013 | 2.4 |
| 2014 | 3.0 |
| 2015 | 3.5 |
| 2016 | 4.2 |
| 2017 | 4.8 |
| 2018 | 6.0 |

Source: Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and RNCOS

The CII sources identify the industry captains and their focus. Specialty institutions like Fortis Escorts, Apollo, Indraprasta, Hinduja, Jaslok, Arvind eye hospital, MIOT targets different countries for getting patients. The following table unfolds the reality:

Conclusion:

The ambitious target of India becoming a global health destination is realizable. Signs and symptoms are the pointers towards this objective. The medical tourism industry is projected to be multi-billion dollar industry. Though many developed countries headed by USA are slipping into recession, India is fortunate not to follow them. It is also facing trouble, through a lesser degree and facing only 'slow down'.

The medical tourism industry will be one of the boosters of the economy. Nothing comes without challenges. Harmonizing the regulations among the players, ensuring the availability of skilled, qualified professionals, bridging the gap between public and private players, adoption of synergy between the players through partnerships, joint ventures are the strategies available for reaping the benefits during this recessionary and slow down conditions of various economics of the world.

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