

Medical Tourism in India

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KEYWORDS

• Medical tourism • India • Health care • Nonresident patients

KEY POINTS

- The term *medical tourism* is under debate because health care is a serious business and rarely do patients combine the two.
- India is uniquely placed by virtue of its skilled manpower, common language, diverse medical conditions that doctors deal with, the volume of patients, and a large nonresident Indian population overseas.
- Medical tourism requires dedicated services to alleviate the anxiety of foreign patients. These include translation, currency conversion, travel, visa, posttreatment care system, and accommodation of patient relatives during and after treatment.

Medical tourism is an activity wherein people travel to another country for medical, surgical, or dental care that is either not available or not affordable in their own country. The term *tourism* also suggests combining health care with leisure travel.¹ The term *medical tourism* is debatable. A number of alternate terminologies like *medical value travel* and so forth are being used. The industry can be divided into three groups:

- Outbound: patients traveling to other countries for medical care
- Inbound: foreign patients traveling into the developed countries for medical care
- Intra-bound: patients of any country traveling within their own country for medical care.

Health care in India has emerged as one of the largest service sectors in India. It is expected to contribute 8% of gross domestic product and employ about 9 million people this year.

A Price Water House Report titled “Healthcare in India”, indicates that Indian Healthcare sector will reach \$40bn by 2012. It is estimated to be growing at 13–15% CAGR.

The ratio of doctors to patients—at 60 per 100,000 people—is also relatively high, although the quality of medical training varies.

The authors have nothing to declare.

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Medical tourism is a fast-growing industry in many developing nations. India boasts of internationally accredited multi- and superspecialty hospitals having some of the world's most talented doctors combined with advanced facilities. Multispecialty hospitals in metropolitan areas offer excellent standards of quality with a sterile environment and tailored care.

According to a Wharton School article published in IndiaKnowledge@Wharton in June 2011, India's share in the global medical tourism industry will reach around 3% by end of 2013. The December 2010 report titled, "Booming Medical Tourism in India," says that the industry should generate revenues of around US \$3 billion by 2013.

Today, India offers the most advanced equipment and procedures, for example robotic surgery and cutting-edge radiosurgery cancer treatment for tumors under nonstationary therapy. The success rates are very high with mortality rates comparable to or better than anywhere in the world. These results in some cases even surpass those of the developed world. The multispecialty hospitals are designed to cater to the international patients.

MARKET SIZE AND TRENDS

World Medical Tourism market is estimated to be close to \$100bn currently. It is estimated that 1.3 million medical tourists go to Asia each year. South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Thailand are emerging as important medical tourism destinations in Asia (**Table 1**).

Table 1 Comparison of major Asian destinations for medical tourism				
Major Destination	Medical Tourists, Millions	JCI-Accredited Hospitals	Range of Costs (% of US cost)	Popular Treatment Options
India	0.45 (in 2007) ²	19	6%–21%	Alternative medicine, bone marrow transplant, cardiac bypass, eye surgery, and hip replacement
Thailand	1.54 (in 2007) ³	34	6%–28%	Alternative medicine, cosmetic surgery, dental care, gender realignment, heart surgery, obesity surgery, oncology, and orthopedics
Singapore	0.41 (in 2006) ⁴	22	8%–33%	Organ transplants, stem cell transplants, and other high-end procedures
Malaysia	0.29 (in 2006) ⁵	9	6%–23%	Cardiovascular surgery, cosmetic surgery, dental care, eye surgery, general surgery, orthopedic surgery, and transplant surgery

Abbreviation: JCI, Joint Commission International.

Joint Commission International website . Available at: <http://www.jointcommissioninternational.org/JCI-Accredited-Organizations/>. Accessed April, 2012; Deloitte Center for Health Solutions. Medical tourism: consumers in search of value. 2 Joint Commission International Web site; 2008. p. 1–30. Available at: http://www.deloitte.com/view/en_HR/hr/industries/lifescienceshealthcare/964710a8b410e110VgnVCM100000ba42f00aRCRD.htm. Accessed April 20, 2012; and Grail Research (A division of Integreon). Preview document. Available at: <http://www.grailresearch.com/Solutions/ViewSolution.aspx?id=62>. Accessed April 20, 2012.

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