

The Growth and Impacts of Medical Tourism in India

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Abstract

This paper examines the quality and value of medical tourism development. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the impact of the growth of medical tourism on consumers seeking medical treatment in developing countries and the healthcare systems in the country and countries. It also attempts to understand the reasons for the increase in the medical population and the main drivers of the country's preference for medical treatment. In recent years, India's economic landscape has undergone a complete transformation due to globalization and its impact. Given these trends, the healthcare sector, and medical tourism in particular, offers a significant opportunity to integrate into the global economy while establishing relationships with other countries.

Keywords: *Globalization, Medical Tourism, Healthcare services, Infrastructure*

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I. Introduction

Medical tourism has become one of the major and rapidly growing industries in the world today. It is a two-in-one industry — first, an essential traveling service combining perfect travel labour conditions (easy access to the place or highly equipped transportation and luxurious accommodation) because who would like to combine coast visits with long hours of bumpy rides if it can be replaced with private jet flights from Vienna straight away?; Secondly, a wider variety of medical offerings including top-notch diagnosis capabilities which finally will enable professional treatment options. Indeed, the expanding worldwide phenomenon of patients traveling across borders to receive health services has become a major worrying issue in many countries.

These patients embark on their journeys to other countries to access innovative treatments that are not readily available in their home country, as well as to benefit from substantially reduced treatment costs, all without compromising on the provision of the most modern and state-of-the-art medical amenities. Among the myriad of destinations that cater specifically to the burgeoning field of medical tourism, India shines brightly as one of the leading and most sought-after locations. Renowned worldwide, medical tourism is popularly referred to as Medical Value Travel, asserting its pivotal role in providing exceptional quality healthcare services across the world. (Khatri et. al.2024)(Fang et. al.2020)(Singh et. al.2021)(Abubakar

et al. 2022)(Tan et al., 2021)(Singh et. al.2021)(Haimi, 2023)(Malik et al. 2021)(Khatri et al. 2024)(Malik et. al. 2021)

II. Definition and Scope of Medical Tourism

Medical tourism is the term used to describe the phenomenon of patients traveling outside their own country to seek medical care in foreign healthcare facilities. A medical tourism journey includes travel for foreknowledge services such as health screening and wellness packages, elective treatments, consultation for a second opinion, and the consumption of cheaper off-the-shelf drugs, as well as emergency and other complex surgery procedures. Medical tourists are private patients who have chosen to access private care abroad because they believe that they can afford to pay less for a higher standard of medicine and service than in their home country or that treatment in their own country was in some other way unsatisfactory.

In many cases, medical tourism is based on a preference for technologically advanced medicine, for practices or medications that are not available in their own country promptly or at all due to lack of funding by the state health system in first world countries or agencies and insurance companies. The term medical tourism in the initial stages indicates a unidirectional flow of patients from developed source countries towards specialized medical facilities in certified countries. Many developed and developing countries have organizational frameworks policies and procedures for healthcare delivery, to not only attract patients for private care but to provide the subsequent care necessary to achieve recovery and results through rehabilitation and convalescent services. The volume and diversity of services have increased, and this aspect is not only to provide treatment for an individual's specific problems but also to treat an individual in a critical situation.

III. Historical Background

In earlier days, the concept of traveling for medical treatment was confined to the elite classes of society only. At that time, the doctor-patient ratio was skewed and there was no specialization in any healthcare services. As a result, patients had only two options: one was to leave everything to fate and the other was to explore treatment from some other place. As the economy developed and prosperity grew, the scenario started changing. The ongoing process of globalization and increased physical mobility are working to assist the growth in travel for health.

Medical tourism has grown globally, with new markets emerging and established markets remaining strong. The size of the industry is significant, as hospitals cater to international patients alongside local patients. Indian healthcare has become a benchmark in the world, attracting a large number of foreign patients. The UK has seen an increase in medical treatment being exported, with a significant number of people waiting for hospital treatment. Private health funds abroad have also seen a rise in cases treated. Australians seeking cheaper surgery abroad have doubled since 2005.

IV. Factors Driving Medical Tourism in India

The Growth and Impacts of Medical Tourism in India

India has emerged as one of the most preferred destinations for medical tourism over the last couple of decades. This sudden spike in the number of foreign tourists visiting India for medical purposes can be attributed to various factors. First and foremost is the affordability of medical procedures in India. The cost of healthcare services, particularly medical or surgical treatment in India, is substantially less when compared to Western countries. Moreover, there is no waiting period for foreign patients, which is an added advantage. Apart from cost-effectiveness, the second most important factor driving medical tourism in India is the quality of healthcare services provided. India stands out as an example in medical practices. The professionals here are held in high regard worldwide.

Growth in medical technology has had an impact on the quality of treatment. This has enforced a higher level of attention on the patient's part. Better technology leads to less invasive surgical procedures, which reduces hospital stays. Also, technological advancements in sectors such as telemedicine, radiotherapy, and chemotherapy have enhanced the overall medical, surgical, and nursing features, as well as diagnostic testing. Over the years, India has become a hub for specialized treatments like dental care, the rejuvenation of the skin through different forms of Ayurveda medicine, and many other locations. With its quick and affordable suitability, all foreign tourists are keenly interested in it. A considerable number of international patients are seeking specialized treatments from India. Moreover, India has more than 20 accredited hospitals. This is the most accredited hospital in the world outside the US. Additionally, hospitals provide tailor-made healthcare packages, easier services, treatment plans developed on a person-to-person basis, one-to-one nursing care, and western clinics providing various kinds of cuisine, easy flight connections, and many other key factors. Health insurance companies also support this cause. Most of these companies are now procuring tie-ups with hospitals in India for corporate employees working in Western countries. In the same vein, this sector has been growing and is predicted to increase.

Cost-Effectiveness

The primary force driving the Indian healthcare tourism industry is probably cost-effectiveness. The costs associated with healthcare in India are significantly lower than the same services and treatments provided in developed countries. Such price disparities have led to significant savings for foreign patients undergoing medical care in India. The cost of heart bypass surgery in the USA is approximately ten times the cost of bypass surgery in India. In a similar vein, the cost of various orthopaedic surgeries is very high in the UK and the US due to the establishment of these procedures and their high costs. Comparatively, India offers orthopedic surgeries at a cost that is quite low. Under these circumstances, India attracts a large number of foreign patients wishing to avail themselves of medical treatment and tourism at its centers. Perhaps more importantly, the low-cost medical procedures do not come with a compromise on the quality of healthcare in India. India offers medical care facilities that are at the same level of quality as those offered in the United States and other developed countries at a very competitive price. A total joint replacement can save 50-80 percent of the cost if performed in a different country.

The Growth and Impacts of Medical Tourism in India

In general, the cost difference in healthcare in India can be attributed to the labour costs in India, insurance registration costs, inflation rent costs, maintenance labour and other overheads in the workplace, and equipment and real estate costs. It is also accepted that changes in exchange rates can affect the decision of foreign patients. Therefore, sufficient equipment is provided to attract foreign patients. Another important point to note is that hospitals can start providing services to patients through package services. By collecting the packaging costs, they can also help patients while taking care of their spouses. According to international medical centres, many hospitals in India have supported this policy. Thanks to these, patients do not have to worry about unexpected surgery times. Careful selection of hospitals in India, including centers that offer the most advanced orthopaedic care, can also result in significant savings. Examples prove that foreign patients benefit greatly when they receive the best care. A woman who went to India for hip replacement surgery had great results. In brief, India is good products, excellent results and affordable medical services are popular with foreigners and that is a plus.

Quality of Healthcare Services

High quality of medical services are the main reason why patients travel to India from all over the world. Therefore, in this section, we will discuss various aspects related to the quality of healthcare in India. Indian hospitals have always maintained high standards; many of them are recognized by various organizations. They strictly adhere to the rules of patient care and treatment. This gives confidence to patients traveling to India. India's medical system is a major tourist attraction with first-class treatment and personalized services. Many hospitals in India are staffed and many patients are transferred to clinics with good aftercare programs. Many Indian doctors have studied abroad to receive international education and training, giving them additional skills to grow. The recovery of the injured and the sick is often talked about, many patients return home happily, and the difference is obvious. The number of publications published each year is enough to attract tourists to many parts of India. There is a case for diversifying this patient population to include a variety of services including plastic/cosmetic surgery, cardiology and orthopaedic surgery. There is also a focus on eye care, reconstructive surgery and brain, heart, gastrointestinal and cancer treatments. These services comply with internationally accepted standards and facilities.

Some of the special developments include: - Surgery - bypass surgery, heart valve replacement, angioplasty etc.

- Complex areas of the brain/ nervous system - Brain and spine surgery
- Orthopedics - Total hip and knee replacement etc.
- Pain management including minimally invasive spine surgery
- Ophthalmology (Eye care) - Long-sightedness, cataract surgery and treatment of retinal diseases.
- Comprehensive personal consultation, focusing on professional outcomes and responsibility to meet the needs of patients, using modern equipment and methods for diagnostic and interventional effect, offers world-class healthcare in India.

Technological Advancements

Technological advancement has led to rapid advances in diagnosis and treatment of diseases, while also improving hospital management and patient care. Innovations in medical equipment and surgical procedures are making procedures that were previously performed in hospitals more patient, safer and more cost-effective. Telemedicine, which refers to the use of telecommunication and information and communication technology to evaluate rural patients, who often live in inaccessible or remote areas, and share patient information and evidence in real-time, is driving the growth of the telemedicine industry. Efficiency, accessibility of treatment and advanced services are important in this market. In telemedicine, patients are the first to use the new technology, making them a part of out-of-pocket and uninsured services. World-class hospitals in India use HIS, PACS, RIS and LIS. With the announcement of the financial support package, the market growth of electronic medical records/electronic medical records will increase. This IT system not only processes billing but also collects evidence based on clinical results.

HIS is used in the following areas of hospital care: Front Office, APD, Nursing, Intensive Care, Pathology, Radiology, Cardiology, Operating Room, Pharmacy, Medicine and Surgery, Pain Therapy and Data Management. The growth of the telemedicine industry requires home health services for the elderly and disabled, insurance company systems, and computerized services for radiology and cardiology examination. The hospital has a digital operating room where high-resolution plasma playback and recording can be done, small incisions can be made, and minor surgeries can be performed using periscopes. Digital imaging, ultrasound cardiac examination, 64-slice cardiac CT, etc. are important technologies to solve some problems related to emergency intervention and provide effective treatment to these patients at home and abroad. Some hospitals offer cardiac surgery, IVUS, telemedicine, and tele-surgery services.

V. Challenges and Opportunities

There are many challenges to be resolved. Management issues such as inadequate treatment, inappropriate research, and problems in treating foreign patients are a major concern. The importance of developing medical tourism is to develop the methods and practices that medical tourism should adopt to provide equitable patient care. Legal issues and concerns about patient safety have been raised that could hinder significant growth in the healthcare sector. Medical records are lacking. Many hospitals are just beginning to hire public relations staff to join international airlines and travel agencies and reach patients at home. Another major challenge is the logistics of admitting and treating foreign patients. Hospitals and doctors are not equipped to handle non-resident patients, let alone local patients. There are also infrastructure issues such as five-star hotel capacity and transportation. Local cuisine can also be an important consideration.

One is for patients seeking alternative treatments worldwide. Healing, mud therapy, massage, and yoga are traditional strengths in India. Telemedicine is another area that can be used. New trends are also emerging in foreign markets, where people are looking for special services that are not available in every country in the world, such as dentistry and cosmetic

The Growth and Impacts of Medical Tourism in India

surgery. For the vast majority of hospitals that can't afford to do business, other models need to be found for bringing in foreign patients. Supporting research in specific areas is one such model. Long waiting lists for orthopaedic surgery and cataract surgery have encouraged doctors to turn to foreign hospitals for these surgeries to lower blood pressure. Another unique avenue to explore is rural healthcare. Some doctors are working with NGOs in rural areas. Foreigners, especially those who enjoy volunteering, can work as volunteers in rural hospitals, thus freeing up the resources of non-profit hospitals and reducing the shortage of professional staff. In many countries, it is possible to establish public and private partnerships in medical tourism to support rare medical services. Therefore, medical tourism is still in its infancy and needs to grow. The main reason for this is that many foreigners come for treatment and the environment here is very patient compared to many other surgeries in recent times. The future is very bright and what needs to be done to satisfy foreigners is the best quality, reasonable price, understanding, and imagination. The number of patients, both local and foreign, increases the patient's need for care. However, this number is quite random.

VI. Regulatory Issues and Ethical Concerns

Medical tourism in India operates in a heterogeneous environment with unclear regulatory frameworks governing its activities. One of the main problems faced by India in medical tourism is the lack of regulations across the country that can ensure certain standards of care. International patients who come into direct contact with Indian clinics and hospitals are unlikely to be aware of the differences in regulations across Indian states. Furthermore, the opacity of information regarding these medical tourists further adds to the uncertainty of the situation in India. Transparency in transactional law is necessary because progress in medical law reform appears to have resolved the problems across the medical sector. When it comes to the provision of medical care, the most important issue is quality assurance. For medical tourism to be sustainable, there needs to be adequate attention paid to patient rights and the ethical responsibilities of doctors who care for medical tourists. India already operates a large illegal labour market, where private doctors, their medical staff and unqualified doctors will be working in medical facilities and hospitals. This makes it difficult to stop bad behaviour (or worse, mistreatment) and ensure that the right legal action is taken when there is a complaint about the nursing experience.

VII. Infrastructure and Accessibility

Infrastructure and accessibility is the second major challenge that requires urgent attention and is a major area of expansion. There is also a need to improve road, rail, and air connectivity to reduce patient delivery times. India is facing a shortage of quality services that is increasingly being felt by patients worldwide. India still lacks limousines and luxury taxis that can cater to the most demanding people. Many private hospitals in Indian cities offer specialized services such as cardiology, orthopaedics, beauty, and spa services at affordable prices. The number of specialized hospitals providing services in different areas as per the needs of the patients should be increased with emphasis on rural areas environment. There are some good developments in India's performance in this regard. Some domestic players, along with travel agencies or other players, are planning to provide transportation

The Growth and Impacts of Medical Tourism in India

services from the airport to hospitals and hotels to boost the country's economy and create space for hospitals. He also said that some national travel insurance companies should tie up with hospitals and approve customers for treatment in a particular group of hospitals, including hospital bills.

Public investment in infrastructure will help deliver better products through 24/7 power backup, good connectivity and easy access to rail and digital platforms for all businesses. On healthcare, he said Indian healthcare should focus on prevention first, then treatment and then advanced care. Some private companies are still considering such options, albeit on a smaller scale. This will enable Indian businesses to provide better healthcare at prices that are competitive with the world. The use of digital platforms to reach and interact with hospitals is important, including creating an app to track patients so that they can get positive responses from hospital staff over the phone, reduce the burden on the hospital, and ensure their health.

What is important to patients? Many great success stories tell of great clinical work. They also tell about the patient's approach to treatment. Good care. By serving patients directly, they can better understand the details of the care they receive. Often these stories begin with a patient visiting a large hospital for treatment. Volume of process creates experience, which often translates into greater success. A doctor's willingness to take risks leads to confidence in the choice. Long-term care and patient care: Advertisers can benefit from the skills of professionals who persuade others to buy through recommendations. Doctors often become confidants or friends. Intercultural interaction: When nurses connect with Aboriginal patients, patient satisfaction, compliance, and trust increase. There are many positive aspects to healthcare in India. Patients always appreciate the 'extra', the little touches that go beyond what is expected. By sharing information about patient care, customers can improve their healthcare and increase demand for ongoing healthcare services. These studies also highlight areas for improvement, such as infrastructure and governance, to encourage competition among stakeholders. Pre- and post-operative care is important and regular feedback from patients is important in assessing cost and quality. Providers must stay in touch with customers and collect different opinions to improve services.

VIII. Conclusion and Future Trends

In this paper, we discuss the rapid growth of medical tourism in India, its pros and cons. India's affordable medical services, a large number of doctors and specialists, and good medical facilities are attracting patients from home and abroad. While trained staff and the latest medical equipment in the hospital are the main drivers behind this trend, the opportunity to take days off is also beneficial. The lower the return, the more attractive it is.

After extensive discussions, it was determined that the key benefits of attracting foreign patients are: - Low cost of treatment in India - Technology - Good healthcare - India being a destination for tourism challenges and future trends, even these factors are encouraging. India's Growth There are some challenges for the Indian medical tourism industry to sustain this growth and make it sustainable. The first of these is related to skilled workers.

The Growth and Impacts of Medical Tourism in India

India's healthcare system needs to grow tenfold, including more doctors, nurses, hospital beds, and attendants. Advances in technology will revolutionize medical tourism. Health tourism will continue to grow, driven by the global shift to preventive healthcare spending. Medical tourists may be younger, more knowledgeable, and more demanding. A personalized, patient-centric concept is key to the campaign. India needs to reform its healthcare sector to remain globally competitive. Collaboration with the West enables economic negotiations.

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