

An Empirical Study on Medical Tourism in India

Poonam Pariya

Department of Management, Villa Marie Degree College, A.P. India

Abstract: Medical tourism is a growing phenomenon with policy implications for health systems, particularly of destination countries. Private actors and governments in Southeast Asia are promoting the medical tourist industry. This article presents a conceptual framework that outlines the policy implications of medical tourism's growth for health systems, drawing on the cases of Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia and other hubs for medical tourism. Variables for further analysis of the potential impact of medical tourism on health systems are also identified. The framework can provide a basis for empirical, in country studies weighing the benefits and disadvantages of medical tourism for health systems. The policy implications described are of particular relevance for policymakers and industry practitioners in other Southeast Asian countries with similar health systems where governments have expressed interest in facilitating the growth of the medical tourist industry. This article calls for a universal definition of medical tourism and medical tourists to be enunciated, as well as concerted data collection efforts, to be undertaken prior to any meaningful empirical analysis of medical tourism's impact on health systems.

Keywords: Medical Tourism, Health care, Medication Cost, Medical treatments, Destinations.

I. INTRODUCTION

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 \$2 billion industry by 2015. As medical treatment costs in the developed world balloon - with the United States leading the way - more and more Westerners are finding the prospect of international travel for medical care increasingly appealing. An estimated 150,000 of these travel to India for low-priced healthcare procedures every year. Advantages of medical treatment in India include reduced costs, the availability of latest medical technologies, and a growing compliance on international quality standards, as well as the fact that foreigners are less likely to face a language barrier in India. The Indian government is taking steps to address infrastructure issues that hinder the country's growth in medical tourism.

II. MEDICAL TOURISM –DEFINITION AND MEANING

Medical tourism is a form of health tourism commonly referring to the travel of people to another country for the purpose of obtaining medical treatment in that country. Traditionally, people would travel from less-developed countries to major medical centres in highly developed countries for medical treatment that was unavailable in their own communities;^{[1][2]} the recent trend is for people to travel from developed countries to third-world countries for medical treatments because of cost consideration, though the traditional pattern still continues. Another reason for travel for medical treatment is that some treatments may not be legal in the home country, such as some fertility procedures.

Medical Tourism or health tourism has been defined by Connell (2006:2) as a "popular mass- culture where people travel often long distances to other destinations such as India, Thailand, and Malaysia to obtain medical services such as dental, cosmetic and non-cosmetic care and at the same time enjoying their holidays". He also added that medical travel is the pursuit of medical care aboard and simultaneous engaging in a more conventional form of tourism.

Medical Tourism industry is expected to be worth US\$ 4billion by 2017. India has a potential to attract 1 million health tourists per annum which will contribute US\$ 5 billion to the economy. Patients from various countries are becoming medical tourists to India for low cost and health restorative alternative treatments. The Medical Tourists undergo health restorative treatments of a combination of Ayurveda, Yoga, acupuncture, herbal oil massage, nature therapies, and some ancient Indian healthcare methods –such as Vedic care, an alternate healthcare service. Cost Advantage is the attractive aspect of Indian modern medicine which is 10-15 times lower than anywhere in the world. (See, Annexure 1). The CII-McKinsey report suggests that medical tourism could fetch as much as \$2 billion by 2012, compared to an estimated \$ 333 million in 2006-07

III. TOP MEDICAL TOURISM DESTINATION

TOP 14 MEDICAL TOURIST DESTINATIONS BY VOLUME OF CARE	
1-Thailand	8-Costa Rica
2-Hungary	9-Brazil
3-India	10-Mexico
4-Singapore	11-South Korea
5-Malaysia	12-Columbia
6-Philippines	13-Belgium
7-United States	14-Turkey

Fig. 1

Using US costs across a variety of specialties and procedures as a benchmark, average range of savings for the most-travelled destinations:

Brazil: 20-30%	South Korea: 30-45%
Costa Rica: 45-65%	Taiwan: 40-55%
India: 65-90%	Thailand: 50-75%
Malaysia: 65-80%	Turkey: 50-65%
Mexico: 40-65%	Philippines-50-60%
Singapore: 25-40%	United States-50-60%
Belgium-40-65%	Columbia-40-50%

IV. ADVANTAGES OF COMING TO INDIA FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT

- Internationally accredited medical facilities using the latest technologies
- Highly qualified Physicians/Surgeons and hospital support staff
- Significant cost savings compared to domestic private healthcare
- Medical treatment costs in India are lower by at least 60-80% when compared to similar procedures in North America and the UK
- No Wait Lists
- Fluent English speaking staff
- Options for private room, translator, private chef, dedicated staff during your stay and many other tailor-made services

V. DENTAL PROCEDURE CHARGES BETWEEN USA AND INDIA**TABLE 1**

Dental procedure	Cost in US (\$)		Cost in India (\$)
	General Dentist	Top End Dentist	Top End Dentist
Smile designing	-	8,000	1,000
Metal Free Bridge	-	5,500	500
Dental Implants	-	3,500	800
Porcelain Metal Bridge	1,800	3,000	300
Porcelain Metal Crown	600	1,000	80
Tooth impactions	500	2,000	100
Root canal Treatment	600	1,000	100
Tooth whitening	350	800	110
Tooth colored composite fillings	200	500	25
Tooth cleaning	100	300	75

VI. COST COMPARISON – INDIA VS UNITED KINGDOM (UK)**TABLE 2**

Procedure	United Kingdom (USD) Approx.	India (USD) Approx.
Open Heart Surgery	USD 18,000	USD 4,800
Cranio-Facial surgery and skull base	USD 13,000	USD 4,500
Neuro- surgery with Hypothermia	USD 21,000	USD 6,800
Complex spine surgery with implants	USD 13,000	USD 4,600
Simple Spine Surgery	USD 6,500	USD 2,300
Simple Brain Tumour -Biopsy -Surgery	USD 4,300 USD 10,000	USD 1,200 USD 4,600
Parkinson's -Lesion - DBS	USD 6,500 USD 26,000	USD 2,300 USD 17,800
Hip Replacement	USD 13,000	USD 4,500

VII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**Objectives:**

- To study the factors which are attracting the International Patients to India
- To study the satisfaction level of International Patients
- To compare the cost of the treatment in India with foreign Countries.

Data Collection:

This study was conducted in a corporate multi-super specialty hospital at Hyderabad.

Primary Data:

Primary Data is collected using methods such as interviews, questionnaires and observations of the admit patients in the hospital.

Secondary Data:

All methods of data collection can supply quantitative data (numbers, statistics or financial) or qualitative data (usually words or text). Quantitative data may often be presented in tabular or graphical form. Secondary data is data that has already been collected by someone else for a different purpose. For example-Data supplied by a marketing organization, Annual hospital reports, Government statistics.

Sources of Data Collection:

Paper-based sources, Electronic sources, Official or government sources, Unofficial or general business sources.

Findings and Interpretations:

Specialty wise International Patients Received Treatment in Hyderabad Hospitals.

TABLE 3

Sr.No.	Specialty	No. of Patients
1	Cardio-Thoracic Surgery	38
2	Plastic Surgery	49
3	Ophthalmology	58
4	Gynaecology & Obstetrics	09
5	Orthopaedics'	68
6	Surgical Gastroenterology	38
7	Laparoscopic Surgery	49
8	Health check	60
9	Kidney Transplant Surgery	00
10	Oncology	62
11	Dental	32
	TOTAL	463

(As per survey done in few hospitals in Hyderabad)

The international patients are coming to India to get the world class treatment at negligible cost without any waiting time by the world class western qualified and trained Doctors for the major health issues and tourism. There is more demand for Orthopaedics, Ophthalmology, Plastic Surgery, Cardio-thoracic and Oncology Surgeries as these are the most expensive surgeries in their countries with more waiting time.

Satisfaction Level of International Patients Received Treatment in Hospital:

TABLE 4

Sr.No.	Services	Very Good%	Good%	Average%	Below Average%
1	Medical Treatment	85.52	13.82	0.64	00.00
2	Medical Services	88.12	11.44	0.43	00.00
3	Nursing Services	88.76	10.58	0.64	00.00
4	Patient Service	88.33	11.23	0.43	00.00
5	Administrative Staff	83.80	14.90	1.29	00.00
6	Food And Beverage	77.75	21.16	1.07	00.00
7	House Keeping	85.74	13.17	1.07	00.00
8	Over All Facilities	87.47	11.66	0.86	00.00
	Total	85.68	13.49	0.80	00.00

Interviews were conducted in the hospital of the international Patients, who are treated and those under treatment, in the conscious state of mind. This reveals that 85.68% patients rated the services provided by the hospital are very good, 13.49% patients rated the services provided by the hospital are good, 0.80% patients rated the services provided by the hospital are average, 0.00% patients rated the services provided by the hospital are below average.

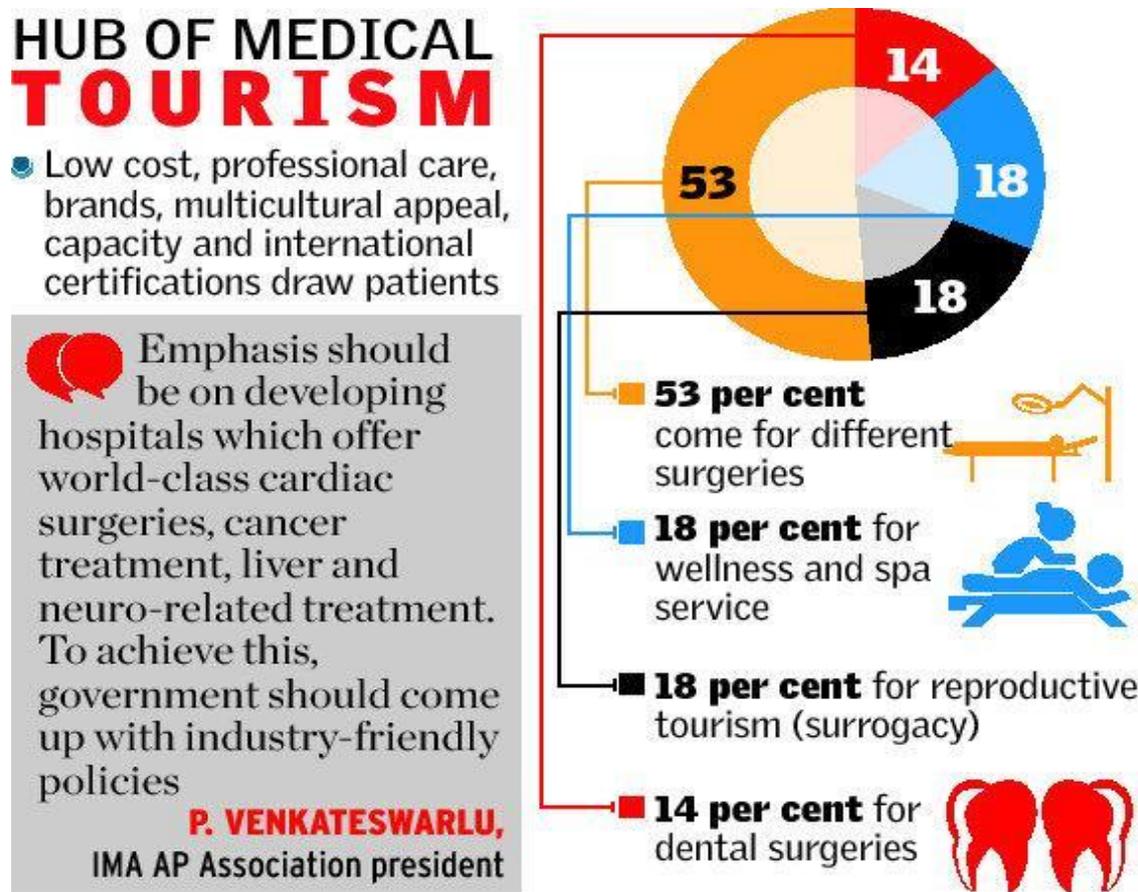


Fig. 2

VIII. 2013 MTA MEDICAL TOURISM SURVEY REPORT

The practice of traveling to a foreign country to attain medical services continues to grow as a global phenomenon. Patients around the world are seeking international healthcare solutions to address prevailing issues with cost, quality, and access. The Medical Tourism Association (MTA) has worked with The George Washington University to address information gaps in the medical tourism industry through its most recent 2013 Medical Tourism Survey. The Medical Tourism Association is also committed to raising consumer awareness of international healthcare options, and has specific initiatives designed to educate and increase the number of consumers who travel for healthcare.

Executive Summary:

The Medical Tourism Association (MTA) has worked to address information gaps in the medical tourism industry through its 2013 MTA Medical Tourism Survey.

Purpose:

- The purpose of the 2013 MTA Medical Tourism Survey was the following:
- Obtain empirical data on medical tourism through probability sampling.
- Verify the drivers and deterrents of demand.
- Affirm treatments in demand.
- Analyse the economic implications of the medical tourism industry.
- Confirm destination countries in demand.
- Identify factors influencing choice in travel, destination, and activities.
- Segment medical tourists.
- Establish important areas for further research.

Methodology:

- Selection of 500 sampling units from a total population of 860 website registrants.
- Survey interview was a self-administered online survey questionnaire scheduled
- Between April 8, 2013 and April 19, 2013.
- Collected 49 completed questionnaires, representing a 10% response rate.

Findings:

- Nearly 80% of demand for medical travel is driven by cost savings.
- Cosmetic surgery leads all other treatments, representing 38% of demand.
- About 92% of total spending on medical travel per patient is less than \$30,000.
- Medical tourists spend between \$7,475 and \$15,833 per medical travel trip.
- For 6 million patients, medical travel may contribute \$45 - \$95 billion to global GDP.
- Latin America and Asia are the two leading regions for medical travel.
- Mexico and India respectively have the highest demand for medical tourism.
- Almost 76% of patients with a future interest in medical travel are American.

IX. ETHICAL AND LEGAL ISSUES

Medical Tourism is a growing phenomenon and it is a potential profit making sector for an economy. Despite the fact that there are many benefits of being treated abroad such as low cost and quality health care, there are also some risks that are associated with Medical Tourism. These risks can be classified as legal and ethical issues.

There are major ethical problems around Medical Tourism such as the illegal trading of organs and tissues for transplantation. The World Health Organisation estimates that 10,000 illegal operations involving human organs occur each year (The Guardian 2012) The illegal organ trade is the dark side of the otherwise legal Medical Tourism Industry (The National, 2011).

These illegal transactions have been suspected in China and India in 2007. Additionally, in 2008 a major problem cropped up in Thailand where it was said that doctors were so preoccupied with foreign patients that they started neglecting Thai patients. Furthermore, the quality of hospitals and their staffs give rise to a big issues it can be difficult to verify the qualifications of doctors and other medical staffs. Also in some cases, patients may not be covered under their personal health insurance as insurance laws vary from country to country and thus it becomes a problem for them to pay for the health care services undergone. Among the numerous problems related to Medical Tourism, we also have the risk of international patients travelling with infectious diseases. Thus, any country looking forward to promote Medical Tourism must take into consideration all the aspects surrounding this area (Understanding Tourism 2008)

X. INTERNATIONAL INDIA MEDICAL TOURISM CONFERENCE 2015(NOV 20-21):

Medical Tourism in India and the World Adopting new technologies to drive Medical Tourism. The market for medical technology in India is estimated US\$2.75 billion market small, but rapidly expanding. The Indian medical device industry has a potential to grow from current \$4.4 billion to \$7 billion by 2016. Medical Technology and Medical device industry, which forms a critical segment of the healthcare industry, is going through rapid transformation in India and is projected to grow at a higher rate as health insurance becomes more widely available and the country's consumers continue to demand better healthcare services.

Opportunities for Medical Technology and device companies:

As a result of healthcare globalization and increased competition, hospitals and governments are investing in the highest quality healthcare and medical technology in order to gain competitive advantage and market share in the industry.

Healthcare professionals are under extreme time pressure to see more patients in less time, deliver the most effective care to each patient while keeping up with new medical research.

Employers are looking to improve the quality of care for their employees and ultimately reduce their healthcare costs.

Platform that will put you in contact with senior level decision makers from governments to hospitals.

IIMTC provides a global platform for hospital groups, medical travel organizations and health services companies to increase their international presence and patient network, and gain market share in this growing industry.

It's going to be a platform to discover the business opportunities.

Core Factors:

The following core factors are attracting the international patients to India for treatment and tourism-

1) Cost Benefit:

The prime advantage is the cost savings with respect to medical consultancy or surgeries. Many of the Hyderabad hospitals, serving international patients, have state-of-the-art infrastructure, highly educated doctors and top-notch services but the figure on that price tag is a fraction of what it would be in developed countries. Even if the patient's insurance does not cover the costs of treatment in India, the final bill in an Indian hospital would most probably be lower than patient's out-of-pocket expenses.

2) Timeliness:

Another advantage is the possibility of getting immediate medical attention. There are no waiting lists or delays to contend with, due to insurance issues or unavailability of doctors etc.

3) Quality Health Care:

Indian doctors and paramedics are well trained and are one of the best in the world.

4) Personalized Care:

Here patients are monitored closely with a personal care of all age group.

5) Technological Sophistication:

All the corporate Hospitals in Hyderabad are having State-of-the-art equipment and infrastructure for the best treatment and diagnosis.

6) Facilitation by Government:

The Government of India has recognized the economic potential of medical tourism. It has facilitated travel by introducing a special visa category known as 'medical visa' for patients as well as introduced tax incentives for hospitals.

7) Ease of Travel and Communication:

Travel to Hyderabad (India) has become easier and much faster due to introduction of private airlines. Access to Internet in Hyderabad is considered to be one of the cheapest in the world and communication facilities are well established. Travel agencies have a great online presence and can offer you package deals that include travel costs, boarding as well as treatment costs.

8) Easy Availability of Medicine and Drugs:

Certified drugs and medicines are easily available in Hyderabad, at comparatively lesser prices.

9) Modern & Traditional:

Modern medical aid as well as traditional therapy, such as Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy etc, is available at different locations in Hyderabad.

10) Tourism Potential:

People, who come for relatively simple, but important procedures, can consider packing in some travel too, with their doctor's permission! This is an added advantage. Every part of the country is rich in history and diverse in geography.

XI. CONCLUSION

The medical tourism is an outsourcing medical services primarily expensive surgery to low cost countries. It offers financial value for growing burden of the costs in matured markets like USA. It also provides an alternative for millions of uninsured people to receive affordable and accessible medical services from developing countries. Medical tourism sector in India offers high potential because of its inherent advantages in terms of cost and quality.

REFERENCES

- [1] <http://www.globalizationandhealth.com/>
- [2] Carrera P, Bridges J: Globalization and healthcare: understanding health and medical tourism.
- [3] Expert Review of Pharmacoeconomics and Outcomes Research 2006, 6 (Suppl 4):447-454.
- [4] <http://www.medicaltourismassociation.com/>
- [5] www.medscape.com
- [6] <http://www.tourism.gov.in/>
- [7] <http://www.iimtc.com/>
- [8] http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Medical_tourism
- [9] www.healthbase.com
- [10] www.treatmentabroad.com
- [11] www.gmedicaltourism.com
- [12] www.medicalindiatourism.com
- [13] www.patientsbeyondborders.com/india
- [14] www.medicaltourismmag.com
- [15] www.nip-tuckcosmeticsurgery.com