

Unleashing Potential of patient satisfaction and Medical Tourism in India

Yamini Sharma¹, Sajjad Alam², Meenu Shant Priya³

1. Department of Physiotherapy, Ph D Scholar of Galgotias University, Uttar Pradesh, India.
yamini.sharma_phd20@galgotiasuniversity.edu.in
2. Department of Physiotherapy, Faculty of Galgotias University, Uttar Pradesh, India.
sajjad.alam@galgotiasuniversity.edu.in
3. Department of Management, Faculty of Galgotias University, Uttar Pradesh, India.
meenu.priya@galgotiasuniversity.edu.in

Corresponding author mail: yamini.sharma_phd20@galgotiasuniversity.edu.in

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ABSTRACT

In the world of global era where all medical facilities are meeting global standards in Asian countries. Medical tourism is one of the important business improving gross financial health in country. It not only offers better facility to the patients but also help in improving job opportunities in the host country. This research paper is a mini review of finding study examines patient satisfaction in the medical tourism sector, with special emphasis considering India becoming place for medical tourism. To address this, the paper included 10 articles which were full text, reports of healthcare ministry, and annual medical tourism report. A review of 10 selected articles explain that how medical tourism started, how it rooted its route towards various Asian countries including India. The study suggests that healthcare systems in host countries should pay focus on methods and policy to meet international patient expectations to boost their satisfaction while stay in India. The findings conclude by emphasizing the need for identifying potential factors for enhancing medical tourism in India and need of development of universal Patient satisfaction estimation tool.

1.1- BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Individuals travelling to and stay in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited" are called tourists. This definition is given by World Tourism Organization. The conventional tourist hotspots of North America and Europe are facing competition from a number of new locations.

India's economic growth and job creation are greatly influenced by tourism. The second-largest industry in the nation that provides jobs for people with low and intermediate levels of education is tourism, according to the Planning Commission. For every million rupees invested, the tourism sector generates 78 employments, while the industrial sector generates 45 jobs, according to the strategy paper for India's twelfth five-year plan. The research paper is divided in 4 parts first explain history of Medical Tourism, followed by growth perspective of Medical Tourism, in next part the study explains role of satisfaction in medical tourism followed role of medical tourism in employment and revenue generation.

MEDICAL TOURISM HISTORY

Although it is not a brand-new phrase, medical tourism has been around for thousands of years. Beginning in the Neolithic period and continuing into the Bronze Age, people travelled to the countries bordering theirs in search of minerals and hot springs. During the next two millennia, patients in Roman Britain continued to sip the waters at the Bath shrine. Much later, wealthier people began visiting tourist destinations like the Swiss lakes, the Alps, and other regions that provided specialized medical care.

The field of medical tourism, on the other hand, has expanded at such a rapid rate in this century that we are now living in an era in which people travel to other countries and continents in search of medical treatment and drugs (Connell, 2011).

1.2.1- MEDICAL TOURISM(1)

"Health tourism" or "wellness tourism" are other terms that are commonly referred and also used interchangeably with "medical tourism." Goodrich et.al" (1987) elaborated and described health tourism as the effort made by the host country for visitors to draw tourists by highlighting its health-care services and amenities in addition along with its standard tourist amenities. It is the transfer of patients from one country to another for the aim of receiving medical care for a particular disease or condition.

According to research, medical tourism—where sufferers travelling from to developing nations for treatment from developed ones—is quite distinct from the conventional approach of international medical travel, which involves opposite of the same.

According to author Susie Ellis' study "Wellness Tourism and Medical Tourism: Where do Spas fit?" medical tourism and health tourism are two different ideas. Two different concepts, medical and wellness tourism were thoroughly examined in this study. The popularity of both of these fields has grown in the last many years. The following definitions were proposed by the authors for each term.

Wellness Tourism: Wellness tourism is when people go to another nation with the intention of doing things which will maintain or improve well-being and health, or when they travel to obtain experiences or treatments that are not available in their home country. Although they usually don't, some incidents may involve medical professionals or organizations. In order to improve their quality of living and overall health, the customer is interested in preventative measures and holistic wellness.

Medical Tourism: Medical tourism is traveling from one country to another country for a disease, issue, ailment, or medical condition's treatment. These patients seek therapy that is more accessible, affordable, high-quality, or of a different type than what is available to them in their native country. Additionally, those who fly abroad in pursuit of cosmetic changes fall under this category. It uses conventional medical methods, which are performed by trained medical personnel in medical institutions, to address problems. The client, who might have a health issue or be considering cosmetic or dental surgery or improvements.

According to the classification, "Medical tourism" refers to the practice of licensed doctors treating patients who are traveling from other locations. Researchers have attempted to distinguish between medical tourism and wellness tourism by pointing out that medical tourism refers to treatment using allopathic medicine, whilst wellness tourism refers to natural and distinctive cures offered by that place. These distinctions have been drawn from the following areas of research.

The rapid growth in allopathic health care sector in developing nations and the growing demand for healthcare from the domestic population have resulted in the replication of western standards while also providing these services at more affordable costs. Consequently, the medical tourism sector has undergone a transformation globally. The market for medical tourism has room to expand.

According to projections made by the International Trade Commission in Geneva, the global market for medical tourism could reach 188 billion US dollars by the year 2013.

Currently valued at an estimated US\$60 billion yearly, the medical tourism sector is growing at a rate of 20% each year (MacReady,2007). According to the findings of a research study that was conducted by Deloitte Development LLC (2008), Approximately 750,000 Americans left the country to receive medical care. In 2011, the International Medical Travel Journal published research stating that Oman sends over 5,000 medical tourists overseas each year, most of whom travel to India and the UK for treatment. Previously, the United Arab Emirates sent 8,500 medical tourists annually, the majority of whom spent \$2 billion at facilities in Thailand, Singapore, Germany, and the United States. (International Medical Travel Journal, 2011).

1.3- GROWTH PERSPECTIVE OF MEDICAL TOURISM

Though it has been around for centuries in various forms, medical tourism has become more common as a result of modern globalization. In underdeveloped nations, the trade in healthcare services, or medical tourism, has grown significantly(2). Due to the growing aging populations in Western countries such as Europe, Asia, and USA, also rising expenses of healthcare, patients from higher-income countries are being pushed to search for alternative care choices. Furthermore, the pace of increase in healthcare expenses is still greater than the rate of inflation. Approximately 1.3 million medical tourists have traveled to Asian countries (Thailand, India, Singapore, Malaysia, and South Korea) worldwide(3). In the United States, almost 130 million individuals lack dental insurance, and 47 million people lack health insurance. Some estimates place the number of Americans seeking medical care abroad at between 150,000 and 500,000 annually. They can save anywhere from 30 to 80 percent of their overall expenditure when they relocate for services in another nation.

The annual increase is between 15 and 30 percent. Because of the ineffective and delayed national health systems in both Canada and Britain, patients are being compelled to seek care elsewhere. In contrast to Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand, Colombia, the Philippines, or India, where patients can have surgery as soon as the day after their arrival, some surgeries, such hip replacement surgery, might have waiting times of over a year. As a result, this concept is currently gaining traction and expanding quickly all over the world. Many patients from different nations currently combine their necessary medical care with a restorative vacation. As the health care sector continues to become increasingly international, in the foreseeable future, it is anticipated that the medical tourism sector would grow rapidly.

Common procedures in medical tourism as per researches include Gender reassignment and reproductive assistance procedures, healthcare evaluations, cosmetic procedure, dental surgeries, bariatric surgery, ophthalmologic surgeries, orthopaedic surgical care, cardiac surgery, organ transplant surgeries (4).

1.4- MEDICAL TOURISM IN INDIA

India, is now becoming a popular medical tourist destination place due to its historical and cultural attractions and its expanding "medical tourism" sector. India's government "Incredible India Campaign," recognition as a "Global Health Destination," along with easy access to medical visas are main reason that have all helped to increase the number of foreign tourists visiting India (5). Medical Tourists have increased from 1,71,021 in 2012 to 3,03,526 in 2020. Thus, this rise is an explanation for all the improvement in healthcare facilities. (6,7).

1.5- ROLE OF ACCREDITATION IN MEDICAL TOURISM (8,9)

The process of systematically assessing healthcare facilities in accordance with widely recognized standards is known as accreditation. Originally designed for hospitals, accreditation has since been used for primary care, medical imaging services (MIS), blood banks, and other healthcare industries. Hospitals were the original target of accreditation. The United States of America is where the accrediting method was first developed. In order to assess and choose whether facilities were appropriate for surgical training, the American College of Surgeons established a program known as "minimum requirements for hospitals" in 1917.

1.5.1- JCI- Joint Commission International⁽⁹⁾

The Joint Commission is a nonprofit organization that is exempt from paying taxes and has its headquarters in the United States. It's responsible for the accreditation of health care units or organizations and programmes in the United States. Accreditation of medical services across the world is handled by its international department.

The Joint Commission backs the execution of patient safety protocols, information sharing, performance evaluation, and policy recommendations. Working with other stakeholders, it continuously assesses the healthcare providing organizations and facilitates them to complete holistic care to patients in terms of safety, efficacy, affordability etc.

Therefore, accreditation by this office guarantees that the quality of service provided at the foreign hospital that has been accredited is similar to the quality of care that a person would anticipate receiving from a local hospital in USA.

1.5.1- NABH- National Accreditation Board for Hospitals & Healthcare⁽¹⁰⁾

The National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare which can be referred as NABH in short, is a board that underpins the QCI (Quality Council of India). This was established to organize and manage a medical facility accrediting program. Founded in 2005, it has grown to be the most significant certification for Indian hospitals.

Hospital evaluations are conducted using more than 600 criteria, which can be divided into two groups: patient-focused and organization-focused.

Table 1.1 given below reflects the state wise JCI accredited Hospitals in India as given below:

S.No	State	No. of JCI Accredited Hos
1	Delhi	9
2	Mumba	6
3	Bangalore	3
4	Chennai	2
5	Hyderabad	2
6	Ahmedabad	2
7	Kolkata	1
8	Nagpur	1
9	Cochin	1

1.6- IMPACT OF MEDICAL TOURISM ON EMPLOYMENT AND REVENUE

A wide variety of other industries benefit from the tourism industry's diverse contributions. The World Travel and Tourism Council's Economic Impact World Study found that tourism has a significant role in the economies of several countries. Numerous significant companies and sectors in both source and destination nations now have more opportunities because to the growth of medical tourism.

It is safe to conclude We can be certain that medical tourism will continue to grow in scope and economic impact in the years to come in this globalized world when so many people go to other areas and national borders are vanishing. The growing number of individuals traveling to various locations lends credence to this prediction. The host nation will also see an increase in employment prospects as a result of the positive effects of medical tourism. According to Bagri, who was the founder and president of the Indian Hospitality Congress, "the employment multiplier in the tourist sector is 2.36 per cent," which means that the direct employment of one person in the tourism sector provides work for 1.36 people in other sectors of the economy.

If what is being said is taken into consideration, then a new niche market such as medical tourism would be able to provide employment opportunities, which would result in an employment multiplier effect. For instance, there is a significant amount of room for improvement for tour operators and travel agencies. It wouldn't hurt for the facilitators to make an effort to conduct an extensive market analysis on the medical tourism groups that frequent a certain establishment.

Among the many crucial duties that facilitators perform are travel planning, hiring a designated driver for medical tourists, scheduling patient pre-screening, and organizing sightseeing after treatment, to mention a few. The surrounding industries will be impacted by the establishment of new positions in the medical tourism sector, such as medical tour operators or medical travel planners. Examples of professions related to medical tourism include spa therapists, multilingual personnel, construction workers, transportation workers, and committed medical tourism advisors.

1.7- MEDICAL TOURISM: STAKEHOLDER

Medical tourism will benefit many different companies and sectors as it grows and spreads. Opportunities for direct employment as well as indirect employment and financial benefit will be abundant. Medical professionals, tour or airline company owners, hoteliers, financiers, advertising and marketing agencies, pharmaceutical businesses, and construction corporations are some of the stakeholders who stand to gain from this idea.

1.8- ROLE OF PATIENT SATISFACTION IN MEDICAL TOURISM:

As we know through various literature India is one of the preference nations for medical tourists. If we strengthen the factors affecting tourist satisfaction there can be immense growth of medical tourism in India. Some of the common factors include Cost, service quality, safety, environment, language, professionalism, empathy, efficacy of treatment etc. Patient satisfaction is a broad term which is the result of gap between patient's expectation and actual experience during the treatment and stay.

For medical tourism the patient and his/ family travels across the country for better health and wealth. In such a scenario patient satisfaction can prove beneficial for the country's economic growth and will open more job opportunities for the people of India.

1.9- CONCLUSION

Our result shows that the Medical Tourist satisfaction scale is a reliable tool to measure the patient satisfaction of medical tourists who seek treatment in India. Different studies in different nations have been conducted with different variable. As India is an Asian country we included financial factors, service quality factors, patient safety factors, patient intentions and enjoyable factors.

Rise in Asian Tourism:

This research also helps us to see why medical tourism is increasing in India or in Asian countries. The Medical tourism sector has been expanding in Asian countries in past few years with increasing industrial marketing, technological advancement and privatization of hospital industry. India is one of the major hotspot destination for medical tourism in recent years. To promote private sector involvement in medical tourism, the Indian government has been enthusiastically launching various policies for such tourists.

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