



## MEDICAL TOURISM: AS A CONCEPT AND ITS ADVANTAGES TO INDIA

Shruti Pandey

Research Scholar, Govind Ballabh Pant Social Science Institute, Jhusi, Allahabad  
University of Allahabad.

### ABSTRACT

Tourism is as old as history itself. In tourism a new aspect is added that is medical tourism. People travel one country to another to seek treatments. Medical tourism can be described as tourism with biomedical treatments. India as a developing countries manage to boost its tourism industry by advancing its technological development with lowering the cost of care. It ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in the medical tourism sector. 21 hospitals of India served as a destination for the medical tourists. As health being an important necessity to life is an emerging investment sector in India. The number of skilled doctors and specialists are increasing day by day. With this demand for better health care facility is also increasing. Countries like Bangladesh, Iran, Iraq, and Yemen look toward India for their medical necessities.

So, present study tries to explore the concept of medical tourism and its growth. With this what benefits India can get from medical tourism as a developing country is also discussed.

**KEY WORD:** Medical Tourism, Tourism, Advantages, India.

### INTRODUCTION:

World is full of disparities and inequalities. These disparities create a void between the facilities which are available in a country for the sustaining of a healthier life. So for getting better and healthier life people started moving from one place to another. In this phenomenon role of developed countries which has better technological development become important. Countries like USA, Britain, Singapore, Japan and Canada become the most favorable destinations for the people. People travel to these countries for their needs. These needs combined both economical and cultural reasons. But the recent development in this field is that people also started travelling for their medicinal needs. To get maximum quality of health care facilities in minimum prices become the highest choice of the patient. In this scenario the developing countries like Cuba, Thailand, Argentina, Mexico, Hungry, South Africa and India become a leading importer of medical tourists. In India alone in 2016 total foreign tourist arrival is 8.8 million and had a growth of 9.7% on the previous year data. In 2017 number rises to 10.18 million and recoded a growth of 15.6% within a year<sup>1</sup>. The main factors which added to this is the better and cheaper medical treatment and development of new technologies, affordable travelling costs with lots of information regarding medical destination through internet.

In India promotion of medical tourism is started since the inauguration of National Health Policy in 2002. Different laws and regulations were also revised in the next National Health Policy in 2017. A new National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare were created. By creating a new universal health care program like Obamacare policy of USA a new era of qualitative health services and their equal provision is started. Having programs like National Health Mission, AYUSH, E-Visa, are another such initiatives by Government to attract tourist for medical purposes. Allotment of medical visa for one



year is further increased for one more year for the convenience of medical tourists. Studies by FICCI and IMS Health a health industry firm shows that India was a preferred destination for cardiology, orthopedics, transplants and ophthalmology. With this it also has high credibility in wellness, preventive and alternative medicines. Countries like Bangladesh, Afghanistan, tops in the number of medical tourists for India. A large number of medical tourists also came from Iraq, Oman, Maldives, Yemen, Uzbekistan and Sudan.(HINDU 23 July 2018)

**CONCEPT OF MEDICAL TOURISM**

The concept of medical tourism has combination of two phenomenons. First one is tourism which is as old as history itself. In fact we can say that history itself started with travelling of the people from one region to another. In ancient time people travel due to their curiosity toward the worldly phenomena’s, to enjoy, spending time with themselves. Our saints lives in far areas and have their peace of mind. In contemporary period another aspect is added in the tourism and that is medical tourism. Historically the concept of medical tourism traces its growth since thousand of years ago. When Greek pilgrims travelled all over the Mediterranean to the small territories in Sardonian Gulf called as Epiduria. This territory was the sanctuary of the healing God named as Asklepios. Epiduria became the original travel destination for medical tourism<sup>1</sup>. The term medical tourism is basically generated by travel agencies and media Agents to popularize their businesses. Sometimes often mistakenly term medical tourism is used synonymously with Health Tourism. In medical tourism the primary focus is on biomedical procedures combined with the travel and tourism. While in health tourism travel for rejuvenation of patients, alternative therapies and spa facilities are the main focus points<sup>2</sup>.

Before the advancement of market economies people from developing countries travel toward developed countries in search of better health care facilities. But in recent time this phenomenon is reversed. People traveling toward developing countries for the curative services and engage themselves in tourism activities before or after there treatment. So it is an ancient phenomenon with new covers. It is as ancient as prehistory and as update as tomorrow<sup>3</sup>. Since 2006 the trend of people moving toward developed countries for their treatment is decreases and a new pattern of movement can be seen. People of developed countries come to developing countries for their treatment. The basic factor which affects the most is the low cost of treatment in developing countries like India. With this high grade of affordability of travelling cost which is also lower in developing countries. Internet communication also plays a major role in this setback.

The purpose behind increasing rate of medical tourism is to get treatments like transplants and surgeries in developing countries in cost effective manner. Huge cost differences in treatments accelerated the rate of travelling for medical treatments. Data shows that an open heart surgery costs up to \$ 70,000 in UK and \$1.50000 in US but in India best hospitals cost ranges from \$3000 to \$10,000. A knee surgery cost around 3.6 lakhs in India (\$6000) in Britain it costs about \$17000. Like this Dental, Eyes and Cosmetic surgeries three or four times more costly than in India<sup>4</sup>.

**Table: 1. Medical tourism prices (in US\$),**

Countries/Procedures	Heart Bypass	Heart Valve Replacement	Angioplasty	Hip Replacement	Knee Replacement
US	113.000	150.000	47.000	47.000	48.000
INDIA	10.000	9.500	11.000	9.000	8.500
THAILAND	13.000	11.000	10.000	12.000	10.000
SINGAPORE	20.000	13.000	13.000	11.000	13.000
MALASIYA	9.000	9.000	11.000	10.000	8.000
MEXICO	3.250	18.000	15.000	173.000	14.650
POLAND	7.140	9.520	7.300	6.120	6.375

Source: WHO, Edward Kelly, 2, OCT, 2012

In the above table it can be seen that there are huge differences in the prices of different procedures in the top seven countries of the world. One could see that for heart bypass surgery in US it is \$113,000 while in India it cost only \$10,000. In Mexico the prices reach to its minimum level and costs only \$3,250. The lowest prices for the above mentioned five categories of procedures are seen in the developing country of Poland. Like this the highest prices were found in the US countries. As the gap among the prices of the treatment increases the movement of people for their medical treatment is also accelerated. A positive relation is delectated between the rise of procedural cost and rate of travelling of medical tourists.

**Advantages India can get as a medical Tourist destination.**

The World Tourist Organization in its Manila declaration on the social impact of tourism it is declared that tourism industry improved standard of living of the destination country. It provides many social and economical opportunities and boot national economy with greater participation of people and communities. Medical tourism is an important source of generating foreign exchange<sup>5</sup>.

**Table:2 Role of tourism in the growth of India**

YEAR	Contribution of tourism in GDP of the country (%)			Contribution of tourism in employment of the country (%)		
	Direct	Indirect	Total	Direct	Indirect	Total
2009-10	3.68	3.09	6.77	4.37	5.80	10.17
2010-11	3.67	3.09	6.76	4.63	6.15	10.70
2011-12	3.67	3.09	6.76	4.94	6.55	11.49
2012-13	3.67	3.14	6.88	5.31	7.55	12.36

Source: Annual report, 2016-17, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

**ROLE OF GOVERNMENT TO BOOST MEDICAL TOURISM:**

The government is planning to promote India as a top tourist destination. For this integrated treatment plans like ‘AYUSH’ was inaugurated. In this Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy all streams were combined in one integrated program. A portal named as [www.indiahealthcaretourism.com](http://www.indiahealthcaretourism.com) in three languages Arabic, Russian, and French were launched to provide comprehensive information to medical tourists. The scope of e-tourists visa has been expanded and further increased one year for short term medical treatment. Separate immigration counters and facilitation centers were setup at major airports to boost medical tourist industry. Promotion of home staying for medical tourists to lower their cost of staying is another agenda of government to enhance the role of India in Medical tourist Industry<sup>6</sup>. Studies show that over 5, 00,000 foreign patients seek treatment in India each year. It will be increases to be a \$ 9 billion opportunity till 2020. Globally medical tourism industry makes its estimate at around \$ 40-60 billion. There is a 22-25% growth in medical tourism.

**CONCLUSION:**

From the above discussion it can be said that India becomes one of the major player in the medical tourist Industry. Globalization is another aspect which helps medical tourist to find their suitable medical destination. It was seen that southern state of India gets maximum medical travelers due to best hospital facilities. Hotel and resorts businesses expanded rapidly near hospitals. The hospital provide only curative services are now providing promotive as well as alternative health care facilities to the medical tourists. Some challenges are also waiting in the way of becoming world level medical tourist destination in India. The domestic supply of health care facilities is yet not completed and people in the far of areas are unable to avail health care facilities. The international demand of health provision put more pressure on the infrastructures of the Indian Hospitals. Domestic health care facilities become costly for internal people.

So a regulatory board is needed to monitor the growth, development and satisfaction of medical tourist coming to India. With this hospitals should also increase their infrastructural facilities for negotiating both the internal and international demand of the patients.

#### REFERENCES:

1. A.N.Badve, P. L. (2012). Medical Tourism in India: a new Avenue. *Internation Journal of Biomedical and Advance Research* , 03 (03).
2. Bookman, M. M. (2007). *Medical Tourism in Developing Countries*. Newyork.
3. Gupta, A. S. (2008). Medical Tourism in India, winners and losers. *Indian Journal of Medical Ethics* , 4-5.
4. M. Vinayraj. (2011). Startegic Analysis of Medical Tourism:a case Study of Manglore. *Bi-A nnual Journal of Indiaan Art, Culture, Heritage and Tourism* , 17-24.
5. (2017). *Medical tourist arrival is up-25%*. Allahabad: Bussiness Standard.
6. N.Singh, H. a. (2011). Exploring the Factors that affect the choices of Destination for Medical Tourism. *Journal of Service and Management* , 314-324.
7. (2017). *New policy on Cards to boost medical tourism*. Allahabad: Times of India.
8. Whittaker. (2008). Pleasure and Pain: Medical travel in Asia. *Global Public Health* , 271-290.
9. Annual Report, 2016-2017, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.
10. WHO,Edward Kelly Report, 2012.



**Shruti Pandey**

**Research Scholar, Govind Ballabh Pant Social Science institute, Jhusi, Allahabad University of Allahabad.**