

Chapter 2

Travel for Treatment: Patients Perspective on Medical Tourism

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ABSTRACT

Medical tourism is growing and diversifying at a high rate. The medical tourism in India is poised to be next success story after software industry. This term is used to refer to travel activity that involves a medical procedure or activities that promote the wellbeing of the patient. The term medical tourism is the act of travelling to other countries to obtain medical, dental and surgical care. (Connell 2006) All the beneficiaries of this industry are putting their best foot forward by providing quality services at affordable cost in order to lure medical tourists. It goes without saying that only those health care organizations will survive and succeed in gaining competitive advantage over others that incorporates quality improvement process on a continuous basis. The results show that there is significant growth of medical tourism in India, which is growing at the rate 30% in 2015 (Saravana 2015) The standards of medical treatment and hospital facilities provided to patients have significantly improved in India with 21 hospitals in India already accredited by JCI. In this study hospital chosen for the present study is the hospital one amongst the list of JCI accredited hospitals in India. The objective of this study is to identify the medical tourist's satisfaction level & also to identify the grey areas for better services. The results show that they were quite satisfied with the services availed & are recommending it to others due to the significant treatment services.

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INTRODUCTION

Travel for health purposes is not a new phenomenon. Ancient stories, legends and fables contain many stories of journeys taken by heroes seeking potions and cures for another. Medical tourism is actually thousands of years old. Medical tourism encompasses primarily on bio-medical procedures combined with travel and tourism. (Whittaker 2008). Over time, things have not changed much except that this idea has evolved to become more acceptable to the new generation. The Emerging Market for Medical Tourism Medical tourism is growing and diversifying at a high rate. The medical tourism in India is poised to be next success story after software. According to McKinsey and CII study the market size is estimated to be Rs 5000- Rs 10,000 Crores by 2012. The report projected the segment to grow at a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 20% between 2014 and 2018. “The vast pool of medical professionals, expanding private health-care infrastructure, growing technical expertise, cheaper medical procedures, world class health-care infrastructure and government support are likely to boost the number of medical tourist arrivals in India to a projected level of 4 lakh by 2018,” said Sharad Jaipuria, president, PHD Chamber. The key advantages of medical tourism in India is low cost advantage, strong reputation in advanced healthcare segment and the diversity of the tourist destinations available in the country. The key concerns facing the industry include absence of government initiative, lack of a coordinated effort to promote the industry, no accreditation mechanisms for hospitals and the lack of uniform pricing policies and standards across hospitals. Estimates vary, but McKinsey & Company and the Confederation of Indian Industry put gross medical tourism revenues at more than \$40 billion worldwide in 2004 Others estimate the worldwide revenue at about \$60 billion in 2006. McKinsey & Company projects the total has crossed \$100 billion in 2014. Globalization has boosted the growth of medical tourism further and has lifted nations out of their isolated existence and makes them part of “one-knowledge society”. Medical institutions no more play a limited regional role but become global actors (Sunita Reddy 2010). Medical tourist usually gets a package that includes flights, treatment, hotels and usually post-operative vacation and rejuvenation therapies. (Amit Sen Gupta 2008) India has the best hospitals in the world offering many such packages which are designed as per the patient’s requirement. Mushrooming of super specialty hospitals is taking place in order to capitalize on the opportunity. In today’s market, individuals are faced with many different options when deciding on a specific healthcare provider. Due to the varying options, quality and service stand out as two essential elements that influence the selection process. Quality patient/customer service is for many, a readily understood healthcare standard. Thus, a healthcare organization’s reputation for its commitment to quality and patient-centered customer service stands as the main criteria for individuals in choosing a healthcare service provider. Thus evaluating patient satisfaction holds immense importance for a healthcare organization as their satisfaction is going to fetch revenues for the organization and hence further growth. One of the primary challenges has been in sustaining patient/customer satisfaction improvement initiatives in the face of competing priorities and diminishing resources. Only those organizations that realize the importance of patient satisfaction and continuous quality improvement from the patient’s perspective also can have competitive advantage and sustain in this international business. Patient satisfaction surveys enable organizational leaders to have some clear insights into the inner workings of their healthcare facility. In this study we aim to identify factors which make Medical tourists to select India as the destination for their medical needs by studying satisfaction level of medical tourists in a super specialty hospital, Indraprastha Apollo hospital, Delhi and quality standards being received by them.

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