

Growth and Opportunities of Medical Tourism in Maharashtra

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Abstract - This research article explores medical tourism industry in the state of Maharashtra. The discussion is framed about cost effectiveness in medical tourism comparison with abroad and other states in India with Maharashtra. Medical tourism a mirror of the early years of India's info-tech growth. Maharashtra is known as the only tourist state in India having four world heritage monuments i.e. Ajanta caves, Ellora, Elephanta caves, and Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus. Now the period of globalization Maharashtra is also ahead in health care, Maharashtra has one of the best qualified professionals in each field and this fact has now been realized the world over regarding medical facilities. Maharashtra has the most competent doctors and world class medical facilities with most competitive charges for treatment of certain medical problems. After carving niche for it on the global tourism map, Maharashtra is now looking for creating a new identity by offering best health services to tourist. Undoubtedly a lot in the recent days and experts are comparing it as one of the best emerging medical tourism destination. After Bangalore, Delhi, Kolkata, Kerala in India, Maharashtra has better scope in medical tourism in the coming decade, be it a Ayurvedic, Homeopathy, Allopathic medicines local doctors are second to none.

Index Terms - Medical Tourism, Health centers, medical insurance policy Healthcare services, Accreditation.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism combined with visit for medical treatment is called as medical tourism. The concept of Medical Tourism is not new one, in ancient Greece, pilgrims and patients came from all over the Mediterranean to the sanctuary of the healing God Asclepius at Epidaurus. In Roman Britain patients travelled to the Hot Waters Springs to cure their diseases, a practice that continued for 2,000 years. From the 18th century wealthy Europeans travelled to Spas from Germany to the Nile. In the 21st century relatively low-cost jet travel has taken the industry beyond the wealthy and

desperate. Later, mostly wealthy people began travelling to tourist destinations like the Swiss lakes, the Alps and special tuberculosis sanatoriums, where professional and often specialized medical care was offered. In this century, however, Medical Tourism expanded to a much larger scale. Thailand, followed by India, Puerto-Rico, Argentina, Cuba and others quickly became the most popular destinations for Medical Tourists., today we have reached the era where Hospitals are more like Spas and Spas more like hospitals. 'Nearly 82 per cent of all health spending in India is private.' World Bank study STARK contrasts are no surprise in urban India, and in the healthcare sector, the difference between what is available and what the common denominator urgently needs is no less so. The private healthcare industry in India are quietly facilitating a revolution

Definition of Medical Tourism:

There are many ways to define Medical Tourism which is also known as Medical Travel, surgical Tourism, Health Tourism, Medical Value Travel, Health Care Abroad, Medical Overseas... Medical Tourism can be broadly defined as “ providing cost effective private Medical care collaboration with Tourism Industry for patients needing surgical and other forms of specialized treatment ”’In simple words Medical Tourism is the process of travelling abroad to receive superior medical, dental cosmetic care by highly skilled surgeons at some of the most modern and state of the art medical facilities in the world where the cost of treatment is comparatively very low then their home country.

OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this study is:

1. To analyze the status of medical tourism in Maharashtra.

2. To access the potential and growth of medical tourism in Maharashtra.
3. To finding & suggestions of the medical tourism in Maharashtra.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For this research paper the data was collected from the website of ministry of tourism government of India for examining the potential of medical tourism in Maharashtra. Various Doctors from the major private hospitals, corporate hospitals, insurance company officials, were interviewed and their opinions were recorded. The Tourism Professionals, Travel Agents some data through an extensive literature review and online search.

MEDICAL TOURISM IN MAHARASHTRA

Maharashtra has a thriving tourism industry, and is now set to have a new kind of tourism -Medical Tourism. The FICCI - Medical Tourism Council of Maharashtra - is a dynamic initiative jointly undertaken by the Government of Maharashtra, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the tourism industry and private as well as public health tourism providers. FICCI - Medical Tourism Council of Maharashtra has been founded with a clear mission in mind:

- To offer the world's best healthcare facilities coupled with the best heritage and tourist destinations.
- To show the world how to deliver "Value for Money" healthcare, with a human touch.
- To project Maharashtra as a synergizing destination for both medical academia as well as International medical conferences.
- To regulate and monitor the medical tourism sector and assist patients from abroad.
- A range of hospitals covering the entire spectrum of medical treatment.
- Over 70,000 highly qualified doctors, of whom 20,000 are specialists.
- 100,000 committed nurses and paramedical staff known for their care and compassion.
- Latest technology and equipment that supports a large number of medical investigations and treatments.

- Tourist spots that are supported by medical facilities, making them the ideal places for rest and recuperation.

Maharashtra is the third largest State of India, both in area and population. It is located on the West Coast of India with a 720 km long coastline along the lush green Konkan region. Nestled in the Western Ghats and the Sahyadri mountain range are several hill stations and water reservoirs with semi-evergreen and deciduous forests. The Vidarbha region of Maharashtra, with its dense forests, is home to several wild life sanctuaries and nature parks. Thus all the three regions of Maharashtra offer considerable tourism potential. Maharashtra abounds in numerous tourist attractions ranging from ancient cave temples, unspoiled beaches, ancient forts and monuments, forests and wildlife, unique hill stations, pilgrimage centers, and a rich tradition of festivals, art and culture Now in the period of globalization Maharashtra is also ahead in health care. Maharashtra has the best qualified professionals in each & every field and this fact has now been realized all the over the world especially regarding medical facilities. Maharashtra has the most competent doctors and world class medical facilities with most competitive charges for treatment of certain medical problems. After carving a niche for itself on the global tourism map, Maharashtra is now looking for creating a new identity by offering best health services to tourist. Undoubtedly a lot in the recent days and experts are comparing it as one of the best emerging medical tourism destination. After Delhi, Bangalore, Chennai and Kerala, Maharashtra has better scope in medical tourism in the coming decade. Be it an Ayurved, Homeopathy, Allopathic medicines, local doctors are second to none, medical experts claim. On the cost front too, Maharashtra offers affordable treatment compared to other part of India and foreign countries. Mumbai, Pune, Aurangabad, Nasik & Nagpur are an emerging medical tourism destination in Maharashtra. The Global trend also witnesses tourism as one of the fastest growing industries and every state in India is putting in extra efforts to increase its visibility in the global market. This is the only state to offer all tourist products that is unique and unparalleled. The Alternative Therapy Service which is available exclusively to India namely

- Yoga
- Naturopathy

- Ayurveda
- Yunani Medicine
- Meditation

FINDINGS

Maharashtra is one of the progressive states & second largest state in the country. Important demographic indicators of the state are as below

HEALTHCARE SERVICES IN MAHARASHTRA

Maharashtra has been in the forefront of healthcare development in the country. It was among the first states to decentralize primary healthcare administration through Zilla Parishads as early as 1961. Further, under the Minimum Needs Program Maharashtra was again one of the first states to achieve the norms mandated for primary health centers, subcentres and Rural Hospitals. The state also has the largest private health sector in India whose reach is quite extensive.

Primary, Secondary & Tertiary Healthcare service No. of Primary Health Care Services is 1816 including Tribal and Non Tribal. No. of Sub Centre is 10579 including Tribal and Non Tribal

The Tertiary healthcare service in Maharashtra has witnessed an enormous growth in infrastructure in the private and voluntary sector. The private sector which was very modest in the early stages has now become a flourishing industry equipped with most modern state-of-art technology at its disposal. It is estimated that 75-80% of healthcare services and investment in Maharashtra are now provided by the private sector such as the Tatas, Fortis, Max, Wockhardt, Primal, Apollo and the Escorts group. Some of the hospitals in Maharashtra accredited by the national and international accreditation body like NABH, QCI, ISO, JCI Maharashtra has top-notch centres for knee replacement surgery, hip replacement surgery, open-heart surgery, cosmetic surgery and cancer therapy, and virtually all of the clinics are equipped with the latest electronic and medical diagnostic equipment. The various facilities in Maharashtra include full body pathology, comprehensive physical and Gynecological examinations, dental check-up, eye check-up, diet consultation, audiometric, stress & lifestyle management, digital X-Ray, 2D echo, color Doppler, CT scan, high strength MRI. Local medics have treated a number of international

patients. The clinical outcome was at par with world's best centers, for Maharashtra has internationally qualified and experienced specialists, super specialists. Surgeons had also presented research papers at several international seminars and undergone fellowship at foreign universities. Moreover, there is an assurance that patients will get personalized care and hospitality. Doctors in Maharashtra are proficient in English; most even provide interpreters to cut across language barriers while the patient stays at hospitals; they take care to see that the visit becomes a pleasant experience.

SUGGESTIONS

Medical Tourism is undoubtedly a trend that is still in its process but it has enormous potential for growth and development in India. Maharashtra too can benefit from this trend of Medical Tourism for which the following recommendations have been suggested? At present there are only 17 hospitals in India and out of 03 hospitals in Maharashtra accredited by Joint Commission International which is the global arm of US-based Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations. Which have accredited hospitals in Europe, America, Asia, and Middle East the JCI accreditation to hospitals in India would help a symbol of trust & benchmark for medical tourists worldwide? At National level CII has just enlisted hospitals offering medical tourism facilities in India which is not enough there should be an accreditation body at the national level. Concisely the Ministry of Tourism, Medical Council of India, National Accreditation Board for Hospitals. ? The government, the healthcare and the travel industry has to work together to change the predominant image in the minds of the average public in the medical tourist. A special cell for promoting medical tourism should be established in the Ministry of Tourism Govt. of India. There is no approval procedure for medical tourism facilitator. Tourism Ministry and regional tourism Govt. office set parameters and standards for Medical Tourism Facilitator. ? There has been a lot of hue and cry from the activist groups against opening up hospitals for medical tourism for the reason that the available facilities are not even sufficient for the domestic patient. It is a real menace to see the poor Indian citizen dying on streets while the wealthy foreigners getting five-star hospitality in addition to medical treatment. ? One major obstacle that is impeding the uninhibited

growth of the global medical tourism sector is a lack of Public Private Partnership and of a one brand initiative. Singapore, Malaysia, Korea and several other countries have established boards formed by tourism authorities, chambers of commerce, ministries of health and private organizations with one shared objective. In India, there is lack of a single, unified body that works towards a common goal? Another major hurdle is poor marketing strategies. Many small-scale India healthcare organizations emphasize India as cheaper destination, but there is a significant distinction in what is cheap and what value is for money. India has a long way to go to establish itself as a leading medical tourism brand that can offer high quality healthcare at affordable prices, with an additional pull factor being its attractive tourism activities. ? The Indian legal infrastructure is not at all geared up to handle healthcare specific litigations in a speedy manner. Internationally, legal redressed is a routine affair, which in India, is considered as against ethics. Though there exists a mechanism to deal with medical insurance related cases, there redressed is so much consuming. There should be one special regulatory body to monitoring and controlling medical tourism operation in India.

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