

Research Article



An Empirical Study on Medical Tourism in Chennai

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ABSTRACT

In this edge, medical tourism is not a new idea. Medical treatment is one of the essential demands of human beings and it requires high quality and intensive care. Beside western world, few developing countries are playing key roles as medical tourism destinations. India is one of the leading names among these countries. The purpose of the paper is to find the factors influencing the attractiveness of Chennai as a health tourism destination. 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.

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

INTRODUCTION

It is not new to venture abroad for health care from different international locations. In this new horizon, medical tourism has great value of interest. Health tourism or medical tourism is not a very concise idea. It may include quality health care services as well as some other facilities like better accommodation, shopping and sometimes recreational arrangements. Desired medical destination nations are not always just western world countries. A new angling phenomenon is people of developed and developing countries visiting medical destination countries around the world for medical care. The major reasons for this may include lengthy waiting time to get visa or medical services in some western countries, high expenses, and lack of medical insurance, or under-insurance. Among the most famous medical tourism destination countries, Asian countries attract more tourists because these are less expensive than those of other parts of the world like US or European countries. As in most Asian countries labour cost is lower thus medical tourists or international customers can save their money from 40% up to 60%. Thus the success of some Asian countries like Thailand, India, Malaysia and Singapore are remarkable in this medical tourism industry.

The most popular treatments the country provides are, bone-marrow transplant, alternative medicine, cardiac bypass, hip replacement, and eye surgery. Chennai is the most famous city of India for medical tourism. The country has an annual growth rate of 30% and it is expecting to become a \$2 billion industry by 2015.

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%

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

Figure: Top Medical Tourism Destination

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

Medical Tourism in Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu is another outstanding address for the health related service seekers where most of the health service providers are located in Chennai as the capital of the state. Apollo Group, Billroth Hospitals, SIMS Hospitals, Ramachandra Hospitals, Frontier Lifeline Hospitals, Global Health City and The Madras Medical Missions are the key points of service for the industry.

Research Methodology

Objectives:

- To examine the factors which are attracting the International Patients come to Chennai City.

- To assess 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 Chennai

Primary Data

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

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 has been collected from a marketing organization, Annual hospital reports and Government statistics.

Table 1: Dental Procedure Charges between USA and INDIA

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

Table 2: Cost Comparison – INDIA Vs UNITED KINGDOM (UK)

Procedure	United Kingdom (USD) Approx.	India (USD) Approx.
Open Heart Surgery	USD 18,000	USD 4,800
Craniofacial 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	USD 4,300	USD 1,200
-Surgery	USD 10,000	USD 4,600
Parkinson's		
-Lesion	USD 6,500	USD 2,300
- DBS	USD 26,000	USD 17,800
Hip Replacement	USD 13,000	USD 4,500



Table 3: Specialty wise International Patients Received Treatment in Chennai Hospitals.

Sr. no.	Specialty	No. of Patients
1	Cardio-Thoracic Surgery	38
2	Plastic Surgery	49
3	Ophthalmology	58
4	Gynecology & Obstetrics	09
5	Orthopedics	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 Chennai)

Table 4: Satisfaction Level of International Patients Received Treatment in Hospital

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

Sources of Data Collection

Paper-based sources, Electronic sources, Official or government sources, Unofficial or general business sources were used for this study.

Findings and Interpretations

The international patients are coming to Chennai 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 Orthopedics, Ophthalmology, Plastic Surgery, Cardio-thoracic and Oncology Surgeries as these are the most expensive surgeries in their countries with more waiting time.

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.

Attractive Factors for Medical Tourism in Chennai

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

Cost Benefit

The prime advantage is the cost savings with respect to medical consultancy or surgeries.

Many of the Chennai 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.



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.

Quality Health Care

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

Personalized Care

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

Technological Sophistication

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

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.

Ease of Travel and Communication

Travel to Chennai (India) has become easier and much faster due to introduction of private airlines. Access to Internet in Chennai 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.

Easy Availability of Medicine and Drugs

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

Modern and Traditional

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

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.

CONCLUSION

In order to transform a country such as India as an attractive and competitive medical tourist destination in this time of globalization, a step should be taken to control cost ensuring the quality of services. 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 Chennai offers high potential because of its inherent advantages in terms of cost and quality.

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