

Medical Tourism in Himachal Pradesh— Challenges and Scope

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ABSTRACT

People from many developed countries, including the United States and European Union, see a benefit in traveling to developing third world countries, like India, Thailand, Philippines, South Africa, etc. while combining medical treatments with inexpensive vacation. This trend is now known as medical tourism. Medical tourism has greatly developed overtime and it is likely to further expand as more such people find it more satisfying and advantageous. This paper focuses on the emergence of the medical tourism as a booming industry and the key management aspects that will help Himachal Pradesh to establish it as a Health Care Destination.

Key Words: Traveling, Medical Tourism, Booming Industry, Key Management Aspects, Health Care Destination.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is traveling for predominantly recreational or leisure purposes or the provision of services to support this leisure travel. The World Tourism Organization has defined tourists as people who "travel 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". Globally, Tourism has become a popular global leisure activity. In 2008, there were over 922 million international tourist arrival with a growth of 1.9% as compared to 2007, but there was decline of 4% in 2009 to 880 million international tourist arrival due to outbreak of AH1N1 influenza virus in some countries. (Tourism, Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia). Tourism is generally categorized into several types which include: Leisure Tourism, Pilgrimage, Health Tourism, and Winter Tourism & Mass Tourism

These categories are further classified into 31 sub divisions as Accessible tourism · Adventure tourism—Hiking, Tramping, Mountaineering · Agritourism · Archaeological tourism · Backpacker Tourism · Bicycle touring · Bookstore tourism · Cultural tourism · Dark tourism · Disaster tourism · Drug tourism · Ecotourism · Extreme tourism · Female sex tourism · Free Independent Traveller · Garden tourism · Heritage tourism · Literary tourism · Medical tourism · Music tourism · Naked hiking · Pop-culture tourism · Perpetual tourism · Pilgrimage · Sacred travel · Safaris · Sex tourism · Space tourism · Sustainable tourism · Volunteer vacation · Wine tourism. (Wikipedia, Free encyclopedia)

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MEDICAL TOURISM: THE CONCEPT

Medical tourism, also called medical travel or health tourism is a term initially coined by travel agencies and the mass media to describe the rapidly-growing practice of traveling to another country to make use of health care services & facilities available in another country, more so at an economical price. According to Mary Tabacchi, Health Tourism is any kind of travel to make yourself or a member of your family healthier. More recently the phrase "Global Healthcare" has emerged, and may replace the earlier terms. Such services typically include elective procedures as well as complex specialized surgeries such as joint replacement (knee/hip), cardiac surgery, dental surgery, and cosmetic surgeries. The provider and customer use informal channels of communication-connection-contract, with less regulatory or legal oversight to assure quality and less formal recourse to reimbursement or redress, if needed. Leisure aspects typically associated with travel and tourism is generally included on such medical travel trips.

MEDICAL TOURISM IN INDIA

Medical Tourism industry according to Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) is expected to be worth US\$ 4billion by 2017. India has a potential to attract 1 million health tourists per annum which is likely to contribute US\$ 5 billion to the economy.

Patients from various countries including USA, UK and some other developed nations are becoming medical tourists to India for low cost and health restorative alternative treatments. The Medical Tourists undergo health restorative treatments of a combination of Ayurveda, Yoga, acupuncture, herbal oil massage, nature therapies, and some ancient Indian healthcare methods –such as Vedic care, an alternate healthcare service. Cost Advantage is the attractive aspect of Indian modern medicine which is 10-15 times lower than anywhere in the world.

The CII-McKinsey report suggests that medical tourism could fetch as much as \$2 billion by 2012, compared to about \$ 333 million in 2006-07 (Made in India: The next big manufacturing export story).

HEALTHCARE SCENARIO IN INDIA

India is known, in particular for heart surgery, hip resurfacing and some other areas of advanced medicine. The government and private hospital groups are committed to the goal of making India a leader in the industry. The industry's main appeal is low-cost treatment as compared to advanced countries. Most estimates claim treatment costs in India start at around a tenth of the price of comparable treatment in America or Britain. India is becoming the destination of choice for US citizens seeking complicated, high-end medical procedures.

Estimates of the value of medical tourism to India go as high as \$2 billion a year by 2012. The Indian government is taking active steps to address infrastructure issues that hinder the country's growth in medical tourism. The south Indian city of Chennai has been declared India's Health Capital, as it nets in about 45% of health tourists from abroad and 30-40% of domestic health tourists. People from all over the world travel to India for economical medical treatments & also take a holiday here & still manages to save money. Cost of certain treatments in India is as less as 25% of the cost for the same treatment abroad. Today, India offers world class medical treatments

with world class medical facilities at a fraction of cost comparatively. It makes India the ideal healthcare destination for highly specialized medical care & high quality medical facilities. India, already one of the most popular destinations for medical tourists is confident to further enhance its reputation.

A recent CII-McKinsey study on healthcare says Medical Tourism is likely to grow to US\$ 125-250 Million by 2012. Compared to many other Medical Tourism countries, India has the Professional, the Technological setup and infrastructure to support it and above all help stay ahead of its competition for many years. Many Pharmaceuticals Companies meet the U.S. Food and Drug Administration requirements and numerous Indian hospitals provide Treatments & Healthcare Services that are simply available only here. Many Hospitals in India like Ahalia Foundation Eye Hospital, Palakkad, Kerala, Appolo Hospitals Bangalore, Appolo Hospitals Chennai, Appolo Hospitals Hyderabad, Inderprastha Appolo Hospitals New Delhi, Asian Heart Institute Mumbai, Fortis hospitals Mohali, Moolchand Hospital New Delhi are JCI Certified which requires meeting the most stringent norms.

India's health system can be categorized into three distinct phases:

- a) The initial phase of 1947-1983: Where the aim & motto was none should be denied healthcare for want of ability to pay, and that it was the responsibility of the state to provide healthcare to the people. This phase saw moderate achievements.
- b) The second phase of 1983-2000: National Health Policy was announced for the first time in 1983, which articulated the need to encourage private initiative in healthcare service delivery. It encouraged the private sector to invest in healthcare infrastructure through subsidies. The policy also enhanced the access to publicly funded primary healthcare, facilitating expansion of health facilities in rural areas through National Health Programme (NHPs).
- c) The third phase, post-2000, is witnessing a further shift and broadening of focus; The current phase addresses key issues such as public-private partnership, liberalization of insurance sector, and the government as a financier.

India is promoting the high-tech healing provided by its private health care sector as a tourist attraction. This budding trade in medical tourism, selling foreigners the idea of travelling to India for world-class medical treatment at lowest cost, has really got attention in the overseas market. The Indian system of medicine, which incorporates Ayurveda, Yoga, Sidha, Unani, Naturopathy and other traditional healing treatments, is very unique and exotic. This medical expertise coupled with allopathic and other modern methods has become our new focus segment to project India as a Global Healing Destination. If we believe, the report published by McKenzie Consultants and Confederation of Indian Industries (CII), the response is quite positive and it could be generating a whooping revenue. Our medical tourism provides low cost treatment. Many state governments like Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Karnataka have been showcasing their medical tourism segment in certain focused market like the Gulf and African regions. (Gaur Kanchilal)

Indian private sector hospitals have undertaken massive investment in the area of healthcare. These super-specialty hospitals employ well qualified, efficient and expert doctors and

experienced paramedical staff working with modern facilities. These experienced doctors, dedicated service minded experts have made available their services for providing alternative system of medicines and treatments. Health camps, lecture training classes are also arranged for general awareness. Yogasana has become popular and widespread and many public and private and other organizations conduct Yoga classes. Ayurveda, naturopathy and nature treatments have become popular around the world for redressing chronic health problems and stabilizing general health. Some world class hospitals in India are Apollo, Escorts, Whokhart, Forties and Sir Ganga Ram

Popular Medical facilities available in India

Cosmetic Treatments	Dental Treatments	ENT Treatments
Eye Treatments	Gastroenterology	Cardiology
Neurology	Nephrology	Gynecology & IVF
Kidney Transplant	Minimally Invasive Surgery	Urology
Orthopedics & Joint Replacement	Surgical Gastroenterology	

Key benefits of Medical Treatments & Tourism in India

- World Class Treatment & Fraction of comparative cost in western countries.
- Patients from more than 55 countries treated in India.
- High quality medical treatment.
- Low price of Medicines in India as compare to other countries.
- Medical Technology, Equipments. Facilities & Infrastructure in India at par with International Standards.
- The Indian doctors are recognized as amongst the best at International levels.
- Practically no waiting time for Taking Medical Treatment.
- The procedures in countries like India are usually far less expensive – in certain cases, as less as 15% of the cost for the same treatment abroad.
- The medical professionals in these facilities are some of the most well-trained and experienced surgeons in their fields.
- The standards of hospitality at hospitals in countries like India and certain other far and middle-Eastern countries are far higher than in America or Europe.
- Research has shown that recovery in a new and stimulating environment is much faster than if you were to stay in hospital or at home.
- No communication problem as all doctors and medical staff speak fluent English, as do most of the visiting medical tourists.

The happy governing equation is:

$$\text{Medical Tourism in India} = \text{World Class Treatment} + \text{Holiday} + \text{Big Savings}$$

PRESENT HEALTH TOURISM STRATEGY/POLICY OF H.P.

A study of Health Tourism Strategy was conducted by Health Minister of Himachal Pradesh, Dr

Rajiv Bindal, based on health tourism system in Kerala state. It was concluded that there is a vast scope for setting up of Health Tourism Centers based upon Panchkarma in Himachal. The state government would explore possibilities to implement similar system on Kerala pattern after holding detailed discussions with the experts.

Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation Ltd. has taken an initiative to start Ayurvedic Rejuvenation Therapy at Hotel Holiday Home, Simla and The Palace, Chail and also Ayurvedic Treatments at Hotel Tea-Bud Palampur which includes different Indian Medical Therapy System; briefly outlined further hereafter

AYURVEDA

India has a rich heritage in the areas of traditional and natural medicines. The earliest mention of Indian medical practices can be found in the Vedas and Samhitas of Charaka, Bhela and Shusruta. A systematic and scientific Approach was adopted by the sages of the time leading to the development of a system that is relevant even today. It believes in removing the cause of illness and not just curing the disease itself. It is based on herbal medicines without having side effects. Ayurveda offers treatments for ailments such as arthritis, paralysis, obesity, sinusitis, migraine, premature aging and general health care. Kerala is a world tourist destination and part of the reasons lies with the well-known stress-releasing therapies of famed Ayurvedic research centers. The climate, along with the blessing of nature has turned Kerala into the ideal place for ayurvedic, curative and rejuvenating treatments.

YOGA

Yoga is the science of the mind. The word yoga means to join together. The ultimate aim of yoga is to unite the human soul with the universal spirit. Yoga was developed some 5000 years ago and the base of yoga is described in the Yoga Sutra of Patanjali. This describes eight stages of yoga, which are Yam (universal moral commands), Niyam (self purification), Asana (posture), Pranayama (breathing control), Prathyahara (withdrawal of mind from external objects), Dharana (concentration), Dhyana (meditation), and Samadhi (state of superconsciousness). To get the benefits of yoga, one has to practice Asana, Pranayama and Yoganidra. With the regular practice of asanas one can control cholesterol level, reduce weight, normalize blood pressure and improve cardiac performance. Pranayama helps to release tensions, develop relaxed state of mind. Yoganidra is a form of meditation that relaxes both physiological and psychological systems. Today, yoga has become popular in India and abroad and in a number of places including urban and rural areas yoga is taught and practiced.

SARVANKAABHYANGAM (General Rejuvenation Therapy):

It improves vitality and its duration of treatment time is 45 minutes. It is therapy to ease away the stress and strain of urban hectic life. As patient's body soaks in oils, the supple hands of the therapists work their magic on his body. With each stroke, a message of relaxation and calmness passes through his body. This therapy, considered to be the crown jewel of rejuvenation, when done regularly, helps delay ageing, imparts glowing skin, improves flexibility of joints and improves mental clarity.

SHIRO DHARA (Supposed to be Third Eye Opener):

This therapy provides relief from stress and treatment time duration is 45 minutes. It is considered

to be one of the best discoveries of Ayurveda. It consists of a soothing flow of medicated oil on patient's forehead. As the therapy proceeds patient feel himself being lulled into sleep. Escape to a tranquil world where the mind is relaxed. Soak and at the same time also awaken his third eye as the oil soothes his frayed nerves. Shiro Dhara is best for alleviating fatigue, depression, mental stress, delaying ageing, improving hair growth, improving memory and concentration powers.

| ✍️ **KIZHI (Herbal Bun Therapy):**

It is also known as Leaf Therapy. It improves toxins. Its time duration is 45 minutes. This therapy is recommended for arthritis and other musculo-skeletal diseases.

| ✍️ **KATIVASTHI:**

Its time duration is 30 minutes. It is a special treatment for treating chronic back problem and slip disc, Kati Vasthi involves immersing the affected area of the back in lukewarm medicated oil. A wall is made with black gram dough around the painful area on the back. Then warm medicated oil is allowed to stand within inside that area. This is the technique of retaining medicated oils within the boundaries of black gram paste over the lower back region for a specific period of time.

| ✍️ **MUTTU VASTHI:**

This therapy is for treatment of joint pains and the time duration is 30 minutes. The pain of arthritis may come from different sources, such as inflammation of joint tissue, tendons or ligaments, muscle strain and fatigue. Anti inflammatory herbal oil not only helps in relieving pain but also strengthens the bone tissues, the skeletal and the neuromuscular systems, giving a comfortable movement of joints and muscles.

Special Massage for Initial Stage of Spondylitis: This is a special Ayurvedic treatment for different kinds of neck complaints including cervical Spondylitis.

Shiro Vasthi: A long cap is fitted on to the head of patient in which warm oil is retained. This therapy is excellent for memory loss, depression, insomnia, hemiplegic migraine etc.

Triposha, Nalikerodakm, Karkatik's Lepam: This is the application of herbal paste externally over the affected area. This therapy is having a wide range of usage from cosmetic purpose to severe skin conditions. It is very effective in Psoriasis, Pimples, and Marks on skin, Pigmentation, Arthritis with swelling and pain, injuries and skin infections.

| ✍️ **HERBAL STEAM BATH:**

In this therapy, a gentle application of warm herbal oil is first done over the body. Next, the individual is made to sit, keeping the head out, inside a steam from chamber that lets out herbal steam from medicinal herbs makes the individual perspire profusely that promotes cohesion between the cells.

The tourism department has devised websites (www.hptdc.nic.in, www.himachaltourism.gov.in, www.nivalink.com, www.himachalonline.in, www.hp.gov.in) in order to provide information. Many Ayurveda health resorts that are owned and run by traditional Ayurveda Institutes have come up. Ayurgram is a novel concept that not only offers heritage accommodation but also offers a whole range of Ayurvedic treatments and rejuvenating packages. Similarly, hotels have also included these types of packages in their holidays. Some of the tour operators have worked out all-inclusive medical treatment package that include treatment, accommodation, food, airport

transfers, post operation recuperative holidays, along with a host of other facilities.

This in fact shows that our product offers true value for money for service. Many world-class, state-of-the-art furnishing and equipment are being added to our Ayurveda Resorts to welcome international guests. Along with these hospitals there are many centers which offer not just physical but emotional and spiritual healing to patients. The Himachal Pradesh Government is considering of setting up Health Tourism Centers in the hill state on the model of famous Panchkarma Ayurveda system popularized world over by Kerala's health resorts.

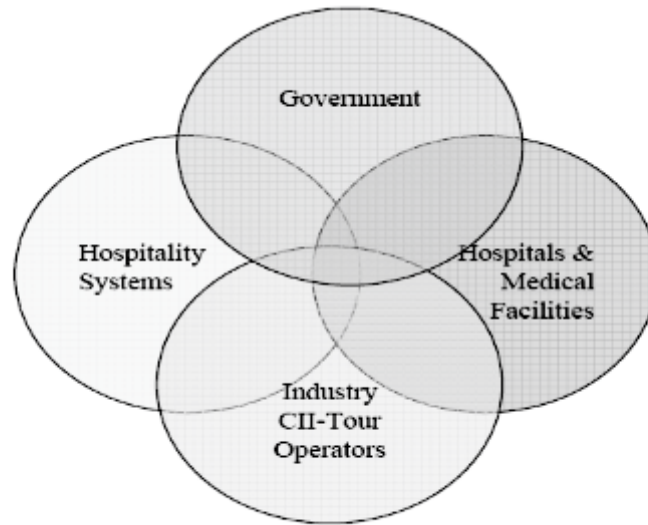
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SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF MEDICAL TOURISM IN HIMACHAL PRADESH:

Environment & Infrastructure: The various suggestions from the respondents and the discussions we had with the resource persons have emphasized the point that we need improvement in both physical and social environment. The physical environment includes the improvement in basic infrastructure, standard of cleanliness etc. Basic amenities should be excellent user friendly and well maintained. Good standards at lesser cost will make the state a more attractive, value for money destination. For this the physical infrastructure and connectivity have to be reexamined and improved. The social environment includes the improvement in good culture and behaviour. People have to be friendly to the visitors and guests, so should be the administration and police; who are responsible for safety and comfortable response. Our old manthra, 'Athidhi devo bhava' or 'guest is equivalent to God' is very relevant in this context. The state should have a responsible political culture too.

Government involvement for the Growth & Promotion of Medical Tourism: The government should play a proactive role for the growth of tourism. It should function as a facilitator and catalyst. There have been a suggestion that Hospitals should be given industry status for power, import of machinery, equipments etc. It would be advisable to follow a Private-Public-Partnership Model (PPP) in promoting Medical Tourism as suggested in the study conducted by CII (See diagram below). The Central Government could also help popularize Medical Tourism through Embassies and through Health Ministries in various foreign countries. More financial and fiscal concessions need also be offered to this sector which has tremendous employment and foreign exchange earning potential. Only then they can be encouraged to make the necessary investments needed for upgradation, standardisation and accreditation of the medical facilities/institutions. Other areas which will require government/statutory support are in the field of insurance facilities, visa on arrival with special facilities for medical visas, quality control and certification/accreditation. It will be desirable to organise Medical Tourism Fairs and Road-shows for promoting medical tourism besides participating in international medical tourism events. Special efforts targeted at SAARC countries may also be fruitful. There must be an active

participation from all categories of Medical Tourism players, industry associations like CII and Central and State Governments as shown in the diagram.



The Partners of Medical Tourism Industry

Some Other Suggestions:

- Invite national and International Hospital Service Organizations to establish their hospitals in H.P
- Frame a liberal tourism policy for Medical tourism.
- Develop suitable tourist locations for Indian traditional medical therapies based on Yoga, Ayurveda and allied alternative systems.
- Establish medical research and development centers for all types of medical services, may be under PPP.
- Frame an effective advertisement and promotion policy for business communication in this area.

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