



INDIA A HUB FOR MEDICAL TOURISM

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ABSTRACT

Indian medical tourism has become famous worldwide and is one of the most preferred health destination by foreigners. Medical tourism plays an important role in developing the economy by earning foreign currency. Indian medical tourism is famous for its low cost treatment from qualified and skilled doctors. In this paper we have discuss the Indian medical tourism and the health standards of Indian health care. Paper shows that the role of the government is very important for the development of health tourism. The government can take certain steps to improve this sector so that a large number of foreigners opt India for their medical care.

KEYWORDS - Medical, Tourism, India, Health

1. INTRODUCTION

From the ages India has been popular for its conservational therapies of treatment and has a well-known position in the literature of medicines. India is famous for giving its medical benefits of Ayurveda, Unani, Yoga and Naturopathy to Indians as well as to the foreigners. A large number of people healed and cured from well experience physicians of the country. Many parts of India are famous for their treatment with Ayurveda and Natural products. These places not only provide treatment to the patients but also have pleasant weather with beautiful nature all around. In India patients are healed with not only medicines but also with the art of exercise called Yoga and meditation. India is emerging as a place for medical treatment which is not only of good quality but is also affordable and cheap as

compared to other countries. India is growing very fast in the sector of medical tourism. The reason for its fast growth is the high unaffordable prices of treatment in western countries which pressurized patient to search for good and affordable medical services. At present Indian medical tourism is at developing phase but there is a lot of scope in future.

2. HEALTH STANDARDS IN INDIA

Indian Constitution has declared that Health is a matter of State. Every state of India has its own health care system in which both sector of economy that is public as well as private sectors work together. Central government is responsible for making policies related to health care and giving funds for health care programs. State government plays an important role in functioning of healthcare system. Central level has union ministry of health and family whereas in each state the organization is under State Department of Health and Family Welfare [1]. State minister is head in state. Indian system of medicines is made up of many branches of medicines such as Allopathy and, Yoga, Unani, Siddhi and Homeopathy [2]. At the district level health care arrangement is of middle level. In India arrangement of health care is on various levels and on each level both sectors i.e government as well as private sector works together. Following are the level of health care:

I. Primary Health Care is a rural based health care in states. These are the health care clinics in which a single physician works. They deals with less threatening diseases and also provide small surgeries [3]. They are the lowest level of health care and are funded by the government. Right now there are 23,109 PHCs in India.

II. Secondary health care is the second level of health care system. This level of health care deals with the patients who are referred to specialists in higher hospitals for treatment by PHC's. In India, the health centers for secondary health care include District hospitals and Community Health Centre at block level health care [4].

III. Tertiary Health care refers to a third level of health system, in which specialized consultative care is provided usually on referral from primary and secondary medical care. Specialized Intensive Care Units, advanced diagnostic support services and specialized medical personnel on the key features of tertiary health care. In India, under public health system, tertiary care service is provided by medical colleges and advanced medical research institutes.

India spends 4.2% of its gross domestic product (GDP] on health and share of the government expenditure in total health expenditure is one of the lowest in the world at

29.02% [5] recent survey it has estimated that 75% of all formally qualified doctors worked in private sector and were highly concentrated in urban . Today India has more privatize health system in the world with 72% of health expenditure made in the private sector [6]. The private system is extremely heterogeneous [7].

3. MEDICAL TOURISM

Medical Tourism may be defined as the —provision of cost-effective medical care with due consideration to quality in collaboration with tourism industry for foreign patients who need specialized treatment and surgery. India has been ranked second in the world for medical tourism. In spite of the fact that India spends its less GDP on medical care it deals with care in providing health services to its foreign patients. Medical expenditure is very cheap here as expenses on health care are very less as compared to many other foreign countries. A large number of patients come from countries like United States, Great Britain and Middle East for their treatment. Indian Medical sector satisfied its foreign patients with qualified staff which are having good communication skills and also well trained in their field. Along with it patients are having facilities of private hospitals, diagnostic centers and also low cost treatment which they cannot get anywhere in the world. In order to develop the medical sector of India, government is introducing health care policy through which a well develop medical industry can be achieved. Nearly 126 million Indians travelled in 2008-2009 in other parts of India as there were no health care facilities available in their home cities and a large sum of 23,000 crore rupees was spend by them on the health services. The international patients are coming India to get low cost treatment while the national patient are migrating other parts of India due to lack of good health care services in village and small towns. India is giving 40% less cost of treatment as compared to treatment offered by other developed countries. For e.g a person suffering from heart ailments in has to spend 40,000-60,000\$ in America, 12000-15000\$ in Thailand where as in India one can get treatment between 3000-6000\$. Even the cost for diagnosis is also low MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) cost \$60 in Delhi where as in U.S it cost up to 700\$[8].

Medical Tourism importance is constantly increasing and it is attracting big pharmaceutical companies and rich investors to invest in health care sector by constructing High-tech hospitals which are well equipped with latest machines and technology. They stress on adopting latest technology as it helps in handling serious and life threatening disease. These hospitals fulfill the needs of rich as well as middle class society.

4. MEDICAL TOURISM AND INDIAN ECONOMY

Indian government has tried to control the international tourist traffic by giving them medical visa. Medical visa is given for a year or for the duration of the treatment. The visa can be further extended longer if the State government has permitted or if it is said by the specialized doctors. Along with the medical treatment India also offers refreshing and relaxing services like Yoga and herbal treatment which not only improves the health of medical tourist but also refresh their mood. Indian government has introduced many schemes like tax deductions especially for hotels to promote tourism sector. Through the medical tourism India's economic and social status has been improved. India is the first option for foreigners for health care due to its good and inexpensive treatment. India is a secure place for treatment with well trained and experienced doctors who can speak fluent English. The number of patients Indian doctors are treating is twice than the doctors treating patients in the western countries. Medical tourism is on the top in India. Foreign patients can get the health facilities easily. Many private companies are providing health services to the tourist. Besides providing health services to the society it has also decreased the unemployment in society by providing various kinds of jobs to the people. India's medical tourism market is said to increase and become double in size from USD 3 billion at present to around USD 8 billion by 2020, a report says [9].

5. MEDICAL TOURISM AND INDIAN ECONOMY

A large proportion of Medical tourist visiting India comes from other developing countries in which there are no hi-tech hospitals and qualified doctors. Patients from developed countries are relatively low as India is still having an image of unhygienic and poor country this hinders the growth of medical tourism. International medical tourist is growing continuously and it has placed itself strongly in the field of health. But following are the challenges of Indian health tourism:

Infrastructure and Amenities: Infrastructure such as road, sewage, electricity, telecommunication, transportation and hotels should be well developed in order to attract tourist. In India the weak infrastructure is the main obstacle in the development of medical tourism. Along with the poor infrastructure hygiene standards of India is also low. A major concern should be given for the development of infrastructure as priority for today's consumers is comfort. Deficient infrastructure facilities not only decrease international patients but it also forces rich domestic patients to visit other countries for medical care.

Hospital services: Foreign tourist are losing their trust in Indian hospital because these hospitals are not able to provide hygienic medical services, neat room and good quality of food. Second major issue in hospital is the inadequate numbers of qualified workers. There is a shortage of skilled doctors, nurses and other workers. The data given by World Health Statistics shows that during the period between 2006 to 2013, there were only 7 doctors and 17 nurses per 10,000 populations. India is standing on 52nd position out of 57 countries which are suffering from human resources dilemma. India even can't reach the fixed verge of 25 health worker for a population of 10,000 by WHO in 2004 [10]. Government should make some efforts to provide qualified and skilled doctors, nurses and para-medical staff. Government should have an approach based on customer orientation so that the image of Indian hospitals can be improved. Public versus Private hospitals: Indian government is having a partial behavior towards corporate and public hospitals. Corporate hospital can be way to earn foreign currency and can also be a platform for attaining the needs of foreign patients. Government should give them larger subsidies. It can pressurize public funds. Government has already granted subsidies on import of health equipment and machines. Promoting Health Tourism: Shortage of appropriate budget for promoting tourism is another major challenge for the development of tourism. India should promote itself as a very easily approachable country. It should make the visa policy easy and attract foreign tourist by making attractive packages. It should also make health policies which aimed to help the international patients.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In India medical tourism is the fastest growing sector. It is providing less expensive treatment from well experienced and skilled doctors. Indian government can do a lot to develop the infrastructure of the country as a strong infrastructure of the country can attract more foreigners to come India for treatment. There should be easy connectivity of roads, easily available and cheap transportation, hygienic surroundings, a well develop tele communications and low cost neat and clean hotels for medical tourist. The visa procedure should also be made easier. Government can also attract foreign patients by making special health packages. Along with all this skilled human resources are also needed for the development of medical tourism. Government should provide skilled man power which should have a good command over English language as the language barrier can be a hindrance in the development of medical tourism. Though India is making a lot of efforts in

making itself a hub for medical tourism but a little more improvement is required to evolve as a high quality medical care destination.

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