

Medical tourism in Coimbatore district

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Abstract

Medical tourism is a new form of a niche tourism market which has been rapidly growing in recent years. The term medical tourism is the act of travelling to other countries to obtain medical, dental and surgical care. According to Goodrich & Goodrich (1987) medical tourism is the attempt to attract tourists by deliberately promoting its health –care services and facilities in addition to its regular tourist amenities.

Keywords: medical tourism, promoting, surgical

Introduction

Medical tourism (also called medical travel, health tourism or global healthcare) is a term initially coined by travel agencies and the mass media to describe the rapidly-growing practice of travelling across international borders to obtain health care. It also refers pejoratively to the practice of healthcare providers travelling internationally to deliver healthcare.

Services typically sought by travellers include elective procedures as well as complex specialized surgeries such as joint replacement (knee/hip), cardiac surgery, dental surgery, and cosmetic surgeries. Individuals with rare genetic disorders may travel to another country where treatment of these conditions is better understood. However, virtually every type of health care, including psychiatry, alternative treatments, convalescent care and even burial services are available.

Medical tourism is a new form of a niche tourism market which has been rapidly growing in the recent years. The term medical tourism is the act of traveling to other countries to obtain medical, dental and surgical care. Connell (2006) describes medical tourism as a popular mass culture where people travel to overseas countries to obtain healthcare services and facilities such as medical, dental and surgical care whilst having the opportunity to visit the tourist spots of that country.

According to GATS (General Agreement on Trade and Services), medical tourism is the second mode of trade in health services. In this mode, customers (patients) leave their home country to obtain health care services with high quality and affordable prices.

Theoretical Background

Medical tourism is a new form of a niche tourism market which has been rapidly growing in recent years. The term medical tourism is the act of travelling to other countries to obtain medical, dental and surgical care.

According to Goodrich & Goodrich (1987) medical tourism is the attempt to attract tourists by deliberately promoting its health –care services and facilities in addition to its regular tourist amenities.

Laws (1996) have defined medical tourism as a travel from home to other destination to improve one's health condition as

one type of leisure. This includes getting indigenous and alternative medical services and any other form of tourism undertaken with the purpose of addressing a health concern.

The seven P's are very essential for any product, among them physical evidence, process and people are specific for service. The following are the seven P's of medical tourism

Product

Number of hospital offered world class treatments nearly in every medical sector. The various specialities covered are neurology, oncology, ophthalmology etc.

Price

India's health care service providers have a competitive advantage among their competitor due to its high standard of medical treatments and services offered to the patients at a very competitive price. In India complicated medical procedures are being done only at one tenth of the cost in industrialized countries.

Place

Internet is the main means for disseminating information related to medical and non-medical care services offered. It is the most effective and inexpensive way to reach the product to its larger customers directly.

Promotion

Service providers in India particularly big private hospitals participate in travel marts, travel fair, exhibitions, seminars, conferences and advertise in travel magazines in various countries with government support.

People

Another strategy that Indian health care service providers may use to attract the international patients for their low cost treatments in India as well as to get the medical services by its well-trained medical specialists who have qualified from well-known overseas institutes.

Process

International patients who seeks medical treatments are mostly concerned with the quality of treatments and also want that the

service providers preferably accredited by a recognized international organization that audits medical quality.

Physical Evidence

In India big hospitals like Apollo Hospitals, Escorts Hospital, Wockhardt hospital, Manipal Hospital, Mallya Hospital, AMRI hospitals etc have a good ambience in their infrastructures with spacious, luxury rooms and excellent amenities same as that of five star hotel with cutting edge technology.

The first recorded instance of medical tourism dates back thousands of years to when Greek pilgrims travelled from all over the Mediterranean to the small territory in the Saronic Gulf called Epidauria. This territory was the sanctuary of the healing god Asclepius. Epidauria became the original travel destination for medical tourism. Spa towns and sanitariums may be considered an early form of medical tourism. In eighteenth century England, for example, patients visited spas because they were places with supposedly health-giving mineral waters, treating diseases from gout to liver disorders and bronchitis.

Statement of the Problem

In Philippines the cost of treatments for cardio vascular surgery, Knee replacement, Dental surgery are costly and it has a long waiting time. The market potential of Philippines has been analysed and the requirements for Hospitals in Coimbatore district has been collected in terms of facilitating the Medical Tourism. The children's in Philippines are mostly affected by cardio vascular diseases. The treatment cost for those diseases in India are about one tenth of their domestic cost. The patients from the foreign make cure of their diseases and spend their time leisurely by visiting tourist destination in and around Coimbatore. The approximate cost for reaching the destinations has been founded.

Objectives of the Study

1. To compare the cost of medical treatments for cardio vascular, knee replacement, cosmetics and dental care between India and Phillipines.
2. To estimate the cost of tourist destination in and around Coimbatore. (Taxi cost, Tourist guide cost, Hotel and accommodation cost)
3. To estimate the budget based on the doctors perception for upgrading the hospital facilities

Scope of the Article

The article is about analysing the market potential of Philippines and understand the perception of doctors about medical tourism in Coimbatore. The study is restricted to four treatments viz knee and hip replacement, dental and cosmetics.

Methodology

Type of Research

The article assumes the nature of exploratory research, Exploratory means exploring the new things. This study assumes to explore the market potential of Philippines for Medical Tourism

Sample Design

In order to understand the requirements of Doctors of Hospitals in Coimbatore to enhance the medical tourism facilities a

sample of sixty doctors are taken into consideration. Convenience sample method is adopted for the purpose of identifying the Doctors.

Tools for Data Collection

The study depends on both primary data and secondary data. The primary data collected by means of specially designed questionnaire administrative to the Doctor's for the purpose of understanding the facilities required for medical tourism. The secondary data is collected using desk research. The market potential of Philippines and cost of various treatments from medical tourism facilitators are identified through the websites their blogs and testimonials.

Tools for analysis

Article mainly depends on descriptive analysis only.

Limitations

The limitation of the study is the treatment costs are approximate because the data collected is mainly based on blogs and websites. The market potential for medical tourism in Philippines, the cost of treatment for different ailments the treatment facilities are collected from the websites.

Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu, a low-cost medical tourism destination

The Government of Tamil Nadu has been very proactive in the medical tourism industry and in wooing medical tourists. Tamil Nadu, a state in the southernmost tip of India, is a leader in providing medical care on par with the finest hospitals in the West in almost all the medical fields, and has implemented many policies for cheap medical tourism. It has plush corporate hospitals especially in Chennai, the capital. There are many world-class institutions and hospitals in Chennai, Madurai, Coimbatore and other cities in Tamil Nadu. CMC at Vellore is well known all over the world. India's first heart valve replacement was conducted in CMC Vellore in 1961. In 1971, the country's first kidney transplant was performed at the CMC Vellore. In 1996, the first transept carotid-stenting in the world was performed in the CMC, Vellore. India's first stem cell translational research center was set up in this hospital in 2005.

Tamil Nadu leads the field as far as eye care is concerned. Shankara Nethralya and Arvind Hospitals at Madurai are renowned. The other famous eye institutions are AIIMS, New Delhi and LV Prasad Eye Hospitals at Hyderabad also well known. Among them, Arvind Hospitals at Madurai conducts the highest number of cataract surgeries in the world.

Also, Tamil Nadu has many hospitals like the Apollo Hospitals at Chennai and Madurai, Ramachandra Hospitals, Lifeline Hospitals, St. Isabella's Hospital, Madras Medical Mission, Miot Hospitals, and Shankara Netralya at Chennai, Arvind Hospitals at Madurai and Coimbatore, and PSG Hospital at Coimbatore.

Medical Tourism Brochures with useful tips on health care are being planned for medical tourists.

The State Government is also aggressively promoting Medical/Health Tourism. It is a much more peaceful state than any other state in North India. It is a leader in India especially in Eye Care, Oncology, Orthopaedics, Dialysis and Kidney Transplant. Today, practically every town has a good nursing home with attending consultants. Nursing has evolved

as a specialty and Indian Nurses handle patients with a humane and personal touch that is the main reason why they are so much in demand in the West.

Coimbatore

The size of the Coimbatore health care industry has been estimated as ₹1500 Crore (150 million) in 2010. There are nearly 750 hospitals in and around Coimbatore with a capacity of 5000 beds. The first health care centre in the city was started in 1909. In 1969, it was upgraded to Coimbatore Medical College Hospital (CMCH). It is a government run hospital with a bed strength of 1020 and provides free health care. Including the CMCH, corporation maintains 16 dispensaries and 2 maternity homes. The city also has many large multi-facility private hospitals like the PSG Hospitals, Kovai Medical Center and Hospital (KMCH), KG Hospital, Coimbatore Kidney Centre, G. Kuppuswamy Naidu Memorial Hospital, Sri Ramakrishna Hospital, Sheela Hospital, Kongunad Hospital, Gem Hospital, Ganga Hospital, Aravind Eye Hospital, Sankara Netralaya, Lotus Eye Hospital, Ashwin hospital, Vikram ENT hospital, Coimbatore Cancer Foundation, G.P. Hospital, Diabetes Care and Research Centre.

The city is also a major centre for medical tourism. The city remains the preferred healthcare destination for people from nearby districts and also from the neighbouring state of Kerala. All the hospitals in Coimbatore have multi and super specialty facilities with treatment options for all ailments conforming to international standards.

Jaresh Trehan, executive director of Escorts Heart Institute and Research center, a leading private healthcare provider says India has established world-class and small budget expertise in hospitals such as cardiac care, cosmetic surgery, joint replacements and dentistry. For example, in April 2005 Madras Medical Mission, a Chennai based hospital, successfully conducted a complex heart operation on an 87 year old American patient at a reported cost of \$8000 (£7000, £4,850) including the cost of his airfare and a month's stay in hospital. The patient claimed that a less complex operation in America had earlier cost him \$40,000.

From knee replacement to the Kerala massages, from cardiac Surgery to a Cultural Tour of Rajasthan, Dental Care or Cataract Operation or the serenity of the Golden Temple or the adventure on Sariska Wildlife. Dream destinations with ace health facilities a novel way to heal are the hallmarks of Medical Tourism. A reason for celebration by credible India. In Tamil Nadu, Coimbatore is another city, which is in the making of Medical Tourism Destination. Coimbatore is poised to become a destination for Medical Tourism as International flights are needed in Coimbatore. Also, the city needs more five star hotels and infrastructure. If these are provided, there will be good occupancy in all hospitals.

The major hospitals in Coimbatore include:

- KG Hospital
- PSG Hospital
- Sri Ramakrishna Hospital
- GKNM Hospital
- KMCH

Analysis and Interpretation

This chapter deals with analysis and interpretation of data collected through questionnaire and desk research. The following tables describes the list of facilitators of medical

tourism in Philippines and India. The cost for selected treatments like Cardio vascular, Dental, Knee replacement and Hip replacement.

Table 1: Medical Tourism Facilitators in Philippines

Facilitators	Website
Philippine Medical Tourism, Inc. (PMTI)	www.philmedtourism.com
Health and Leisure (Gulf Express Corporation Medical Tourism Services)	www.healthandleisure.net
MedPharm International Philippines	www.allanvisitacion.com/medpharm
Retirement & Healthcare Coalition International	www.longstayphilippines.com
RxPinoy	www.rxpino.com

The medical tourism facilitators are the top rated medical tourism facilitators which are recognized by the government of Philippines. ¹They are rated based on their facilities and their accreditation from the medical council of Philippines.

Table 2: Medical Tourism Facilitators in India

Facilitators	Website
Indicure	www.indicure.com
JD Healthcare	www.jdhealthcare.com
Medical Tourism in India - Erco Travels	www.medicaltourismindia.com
Med In India	www.medaccessindia.com
Mediscapes India	www.mediescapes.com
Medi Tours	www.meditours.org
Med Access India	www.medaccessindia.com
Heal & Wheel	www.heal-wheel-india.com
Recover Discover	www.recoverdiscover.com
Nuovocare	www.nuovocarehealthtourism.com

The medical tourism facilitators stated above are the popular medical tourism facilitators recognized by the travel and health association of India².

Table 3: Treatment Cost in Philippines

Treatments	Cost(Approximate in dollars)
Cardio vascular	2300
Dental	1250-3000
Knee replacement	6650-10900
Hip replacement	10000-12000

The above treatment cost are obtained from the medical tourism facilitators of Phillipiness stated in the table

Table 4: Treatment Cost in India

Treatments	Cost(Approximate in dollars)
Cardio vascular	4000-9000
Dental	1000-5000
Knee replacement	6500-13000
Hip Replacement	10000-15000

The treatment cost in the table are approximately listed out from the top rated medical tourism facilitators of India which are stated in the table

The combined cost of treatment cost for the cardio vascular, dental, knee replacement and hip replacement are founded

from the above listed medical tourism facilitators of India and Philippines.

Table 5: Treatment Cost Comparison between India and Philippines

Treatment	Philippines(Dollars)	India(Dollars)
Cardio vascular	4000-9000	2300-4500
Dental	1000-5000	1250-3000
Knee replacement	6500-13000	6650-10900
Hip replacement	10000-15000	10000-12000

The Indian cost for the various treatments are comparatively low than that of Philippines treatment costs and also the treatment quality in India is comparatively good with advanced medical equipments.

The Tourist Destination Cost

There are various popular travel agents at Coimbatore which are well known for their timely service and the service quality. They are listed below based on the basis of desk research desk research.

Table 6: Top Rated Travel Agencies in Coimbatore

Travel agencies	Address	Contact Number
Travel Destination	136 Nehru Street, Ramnagar, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu (West) - 641009	91999 4176560
Emperor Traveline	32 A Bhashyakarlu Road East D B Road, RS Puram, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu (South) - 641002	98431 99699
Topline Travels	8 / 9, Hirudaya Building K K Lane 2, Avinashi Road, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu (West) - 641018	98422 53503
Accueil Tours And Travels	396 Bharathiyar Road, New Sidhapudur, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu (Central) - 641044	9843205000
Hye Bye Tours & Travels	261-A, Kamarajar Road Uppilipalayam PO, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu (East) - 641015	99767 40000

The most famous tourist destinations in and around Coimbatore are Perur, Pollachi, Cochin and Ooty. The cost for reaching these destinations are collected from various travel

agents in the form of quotations and it has been included in the annexure.

Table 7: Cost for Reaching the Destination Perur

Travel Agent	Day Rent	Per Km rate	Driver Bata	No Of Hours	Total kilometre	Approximate cost
Topline travels	1600	7.50	250	4	8	1910
Hye bye tours and travels	1400	7.50	200	4	8	1600

Perur is a holistic tourist destination located near to Coimbatore city within 8 kilometre can be reached by 4 hours of travel which has a famous Pattiswara temple and Isha yoga. From top line travels it has been identified rent for the vehicle

is Rs.1600 and driver bata Rs.250 to reach the destination. In Hye bye tours and travel rent of the vehicle to reach the destination is Rs.1400 and Driver bata Rs.200. It cost Rs.7.50 per kilometre in both the travel agency.

Table 8: Cost for Reaching The Destination Pollachi

Travel Agent	Day Rent	Per Km Rate	Driver Bata	No Of Hours	Total kilometre	Approximate Cost
Topline travels	1600	7.50	250	12	38	2135
Hye bye tours and travels	1400	7.50	200	12	38	1885

Pollachi is situated 38 kilometre away from Coimbatore can be reached within 12 hours of travel. The rent of the vehicle costs around Rs.1600 and driver bata Rs.250 in topline travels. The

rent of a vehicle in Hye bye tours and travels is Rs. 1400,driver bataRs.200. Both the travel agents charge Rs.7.50 per kilometre.

Table 9: Cost For Reaching The Destination Cochin

Travel Agent	Day Rent	Per Km rate	Driver Bata	No Of Hours	Total kilometre	Approximate Cost
Topline travels	1600	7.50	300	13	140	2950
Hye bye tours and travels	1800	12.00	200	13	140	3680

Cochin is a place situated at Kerala which is also known as God’s Place and it is situated 140 kilometre away from Coimbatore. The topline travel agents vehicle rent costs around Rs.1600, driver bata is Rs.300 and they charge Rs.7.50 per

kilometre. The vehicle cost is Rs.1800, driver bata is 200 and their per kilometre rate is Rs.12.00 at Hye bye tours and travels. It takes about 13 hours to reach the destination through both the travel agents

Table 10: Cost of Reaching the Destination Ooty

Travel Agent	Day Rent	Per Km Rate	Driver Bata	No Of Hours	Total kilometre	Approximate Cost
Topline travels	1600	8.50	300	6	97	2724.5
Hye bye tours and travels	1400	7.50	250	6	97	2377.5

Ooty is an amazing hill station situated at 97 Kilometre away from Coimbatore and it is the queen of hills. Topline travels charge for their vehicle about Rs.1600, driver bata Rs.300 and per kilo meter rate is Rs.8.50. Hye bye tours and travels has its vehicle rent of Rs.1400, driver bata is 250 and per kilometre rent is 7.50. The destination can be reached by 6 hours travel from Coimbatore

Table 11: Approximate cost for the various Destinations

Destinations	Kilo meters	NO Of Hours	Top line travels	Hye bye tours and travels
Pollachi	38	12	2135	1885
Perur	8	6	1910	1600
Cochin	140	13	2950	3680
Ooty	97	12	2724.5	2377.5

Among the travel agencies Hye bye tours and travels have a better service quality and has a reasonable charges.

Upgradation of Hospital Facilities

Based on the survey carried out at Coimbatore hospitals from 60 Doctors the requirements for implementing the medical tourism in the hospital are prioritized as follows using the mean

Table 12: Ranking of Requirements

	Mean	Rank
Web site for facilitating medical tourism	1.6667	1
Medical tourism facilitator(travel/insurance/tourism)	1.8500	2
Special dietary services	2.0000	3
Computer system with internet connectivity	2.0333	4
Electronic medical record transfer and receiving equipments	2.1000	5
Special training for staffs to treat foreign patients	2.2667	6
Availability of advanced technological equipments	2.3333	7
Increase the number of skilled staffs	2.4833	8
Increase the number of speciality rooms and beds for medical tourist	2.4333	9

The web site for facilitating medical tourism has been ranked first through the survey conducted.

From the survey founded the medical equipments that are required by the Doctors of Hospitals in Coimbatore. They are as follows

- Electro Convulsive Therapy[ECT]
- Nebulizer
- Cardiac tables
- Hip protractor
- Balance scanner
- Autoclave Machine

Conclusion

Findings

The results of finding the treatment cost in India and Philippines are as follows

Treatment Cost

- The cost for the cardio vascular is ranging between \$4000-\$9000 in Phillipiness and it is \$2300-\$4500 in India.
- The cost for the dental is ranging between \$10000-\$5000

in Phillipiness and it is \$1250-\$3000 in India.

- The cost for the Knee replacement is ranging between \$6500-\$13000 in Phillipiness and it is \$6650-\$10900 in India.
- The cost for the hip replacement is ranging between \$10000-\$15000 in Phillipiness and it is \$10000-\$12000 in India.

Hence the treatment cost is comparatively low in India than that of Phillipiness.

Travel agents

The top line travel agencies have a variety of packages for both local and international with a reasonable cost and also have a wide range of packages with visa arrangements etc.

Ranking of requirements

The requirements for facilitating medical tourism has been ranked as follows. The first ranking is for the requirement of web site for facilitating medical tourism followed by medical tourism facilitator(travel/insurance/tourism),special dietary services, computer system with internet connectivity, electronic medical record transfer and receiving equipments, special training for staffs to treat foreign patients, availability of advanced technological equipments, increase the number of skilled staff and finally increase the number of speciality rooms and beds for medical tourist.

Required Equipments

The required equipments by the Doctors are as follows

- Electro Convulsive Therapy[ECT]
- Nebulizer
- Cardiac tables
- Hip protractor
- Balance scanner
- Autoclave Machine

Recommendations

- Medical tourism can be explored at a larger extend in Philippines. The cost of various treatments in India particularly in Coimbatore is less when compared with Philippines it has been stated in the previous table. Hence medical tourism can be explored at Philippines.
- Medical tourism facilitator can be made available so that the further facilitation can happen at a positive side.
- The requirements for upgrading the hospital facilities in regard with implementing medical tourism at Sri Ramakrishna Hospital are been collected from the Doctors from various departments of Sri Ramakrishna Hospital through Questionnar. Among the various requirements web site for facilitating medical tourism is been rated as very essential followed by other requirements that are stated in the table.
- From the desk research it has been founded that South African government is seeking for a joint venture for it's Health sector. So Sri Ramakrishna Hospital can explore its medical tourism in South Africa.

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