



A STUDY ON MEDICAL TOURISM FOR MEDICAL CARE CITY IN AEROCITY OF KARNATAKA

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Abstract

The Tourism sector has grown exponentially during the last three decade all over the world. Different countries have adopted different strategies based on their resources, potential to engage and entertain tourists. Conventionally they are more on to the conservative way of heritage, wildlife and other type of tourism based on their avenues and resources. In the last decade wellness tourism has taken a different dimension with medical tourism finding new horizon for the expansion and attracting new type of travelers/ tourists. Asian countries are finding the best option for new type of tourism venture. India has almost become the hub for the Asian continent attracting people from Bangladesh, Maldives, West Asia, Afghanistan etc. The major factor being cost effectiveness and good care with latest technology, consideration of this tourism with a longterm perspective is very attractive and very yielding too. While Chennai and Mumbai have become the hub for India's medical tourism, Karnataka is yet to reach a level of encashing its potential and exploring the available opportunities. A Concept of having a Centre of Medical Tourism next to Bangalore Airport and hub linking them at various major locations of Karnataka was thought of. This is a concept paper to bring out the scope and challenges of Karnataka Medical Tourism. (the empirical study is being conducted and is under progress)

Keywords: *Medical tourism in India, Karnataka Medical Tourism, Medical care city, Medical advantage Bangalore.*

Introduction

Tourism has become one of the major sectors for creating job opportunities and for economic development. The sector has noticed a considerable shift during the last three decades. Health care industry is the second largest industry after retails. Indian economy adds about 1.92 lakhs crores to its revenue through tourism. The state of Tamilnadu and Maharastra are the major shareholders of the revenue on tourism. Though the conventional heritage and cultural tourism earns a good share on the tourism, these two states also have a major share on the medical tourism. While Maharastra gets about 27 percent of the medical tourism revenue, Tamil Nadu gets about 15 percent of the revenue with the major place being Mumbai and Chennai. These two are the major hubs of the medical tourism in India. The advantage for India is that the neighboring countries have relatively less facilities on health care which gives an edge over other countries.

Present Position of Medical Tourism in India

Medical Tourism is mainly of private medical care for patients from various countries travelling across the countries seeking treatment around the globe. The global health care industry generates around \$3.3 trillion growing at 13 percent. In India there are five states which are leading in the medical tourism. Maharastra(Mumbai), Tamilnadu (Chennai), Telangana(Hyderabad), Delhi, Kerala and Karnataka (Bangalore). "India Building Best Practices in Health Care Services Globally 2019" suggest that India will be the hub for medical tourism in the coming year due to the escalating cost of medical facilities in UK and USA. It also mentions that people look for treatment from India as one of the preferred destinations for medical tourism. India is one of the top five countries with renowned doctors and the availability of latest technology with the least fatality rate. Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) has estimated the medical tourism to touch \$9 billion by 2020. Also India occupies the 5th position out of 41 countries preferred for medical tourism (as per medical Index overall ranking 2016). About five lakh foreign patients from Bangladesh, Maldives, South Africa, Afghanistan etc travel to India for health care. The main treatments are Heart and Bone marrow transplant, Liver & Kidney transplant, Spine and brain surgeries, Joint Replacement, cancer treatment etc. While



the government has made its effort there are also private players like Tata, Fortis, Apollo, Max etc have made major investments in setting up modernized hospitals and facility centers for developing this sector.

The Reality and Factors of the Medical Tourism

Medical Tourism has grown during the past five years at a rate of twenty five percent per year. It has grown from \$3 billion in 2018 to \$9 Billion in 2020. The costs of some of the treatments are as low as one tenth of the cost being charged in UK & USA. In real sense this is one of the hidden treasures the industry has found during the last few years. For India 34 percent of medical tourism is contributed by Bangladesh & Afghanistan. While major share of Maldives and GCC countries patients travel to Kerala. Other than Mumbai and Chennai, Kerala stands as the most preferred destination for healthcare with 5-7 percent and having a scope for increase to 10-12 percent share. India has more than 600 hospitals accredited by National Accreditation Bureau for Hospitals (NABH). India is preferred since one can save at least 50 percent of the cost. The daily travel cost is almost one tenth they spend in places like UK. The post-operative mortality is the least as compared to UK and USA. As an additional advantage it has tourist attraction and also package for health care. India has one of the best nurses in the world for facilitating the medical care and also India has more than 1000 nurses training centers.

The Situation in Karnataka

Bangalore has more than 15 hospitals (multispecialty hospitals) which caters to the health care for international traveler specializing in fields like oncology, orthopaedics etc. Hospitals like Fortis Bangalore get patients from more than 55 countries and it is operating in 11 countries. Some of the major hospitals like Apollo Hospital, Columbia Asia Hospital, Manipal Hospital, Narayana Hrudayalaya don't focus on foreign travelers. Their local revenue itself is multiplying and the number of patients is growing year after year. Their concern is not much on medical tourism though they are catering to quite a number. Karnataka in its tourism policy 2009-2015 announced "medical tourism as one of the streams that will be promoted". While it was taking 15 days to get a medical e-visa in India it was taking only 1 day in Singapore. The situation has changed and easy e visa for 171 countries are being issued by the government. As a master plan for the medical tourism in Bangalore out of the 12000 acres of development in Devanahalli, government had planned 300 acres for medical hub with Private Public Partnership. Apparently in reality it seems to have remained in paper. The study of Jones Lang LaSalle Mehraj (JLLM) has found that there are gaps and it dropped to mere 26 acres of land for three hospitals at Devanahalli Business Park.

Reasons for the Medical Tourism in Bangalore

- When we understand the benefits of medical tourism the following points justify the need to give it a thought to initiate measures towards medical tourism in Bangalore.
- The government has planned to give accreditation to hospitals like star hotels in the name of gold and silver and assistance for promotion by tourism department.
- Other than the low cost it is also the long waiting period and the procedures involved in countries like UK and Canada. More than that it is technological growth and new standards attract the tourists for treatment.
- There is lack of facilities in low and middle income countries like Asia & Africa
- There is no language barrier in Bangalore as a cosmopolitan city, since English is commonly spoken and hospitals do arrange for translator.
- The accredited hospitals do take care of the patient's facilities other than the treatment like dedicated staff, requirement of chefs for the nature of food they look for and also the type of rooms they look for.
- Some of the patients comparatively feel better and appreciate the care and professionalism in Bangalore as compared to Singapore & Thailand
- Twenty percent of Bangladesh tourists to India for medical tourism come to Bangalore.
- As the saying in the industry goes it is "First World Treatment at Third World Price".



Table for main source of medical tourism

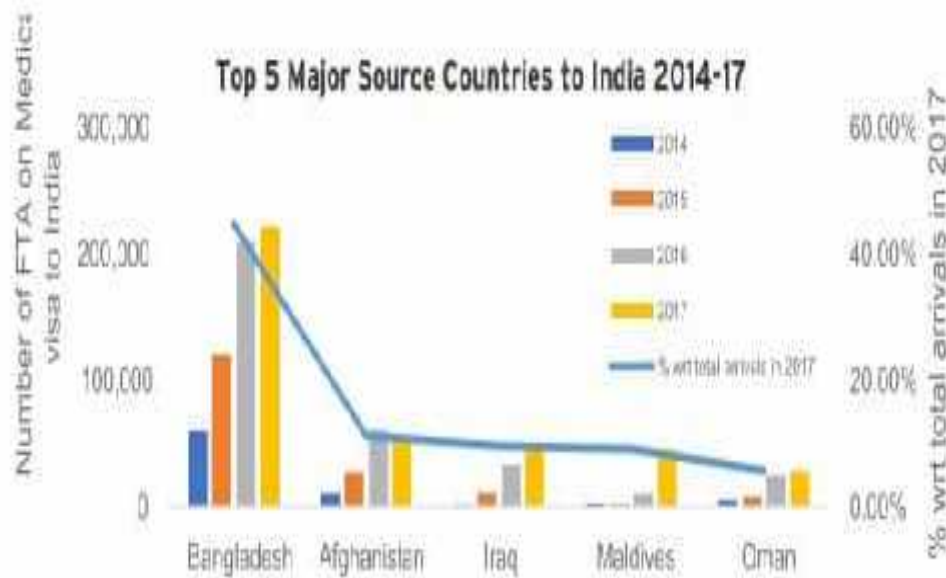


Figure 25. Trend of FTA arrivals from top 5 source countries and % of arrivals with respect to total FTA in 2017

Source: Ministry of Tourism, 2014-17 & EY Analysis

Challenges

Though the Karnataka tourism policy 2009-15 has announced for promotion of medical tourism as one of its aims it has hardly taken off. There is a lack of flexibility on the medical visas which are normally issued for a month and issues crop up when the treatment goes beyond the period. The big players in health sector are not keen on expanding their domain in medical tourism. With high migration of medical professionals and nurses there is a shortage of experienced and highly skilled doctors. The traffic congestion is one of the major factors for the patients and their attendants. Travelling during medical emergency is a real problem in Bangalore with the airport 40 kilo meter away from the city and reaching air port from and to the hospitals are real adventures. The health sector has the least expenditure from government side and it mainly survives on private hospitals that have a sort of monopoly in this sector. One of the reasons for the medical tourism not taking forward is the migration of health workers.

Major Advantage

Travelers for medical tourism want to get over their ailments with the best of the facility. Also as part of their visit post treatment they want relax, rejuvenate and rejoice and enjoy the stay till the last day in India. Hence more than the medical facilities and the tourism industry the hospitality sector too get benefitted. It also attracts new areas of therapies like Ayurveda, Accupressure, Siddha, Homeopathy, Unani which give different type of healing and result. The spiritual and Yoga healing is also becoming popular among the foreign visitors. The tourists find it easy to adjust to his pocket and adoptable to his terms and environment. India is not without any competition. It has to compete with countries like Malaysia, Singapore, Mexico, Costa Rica, Thailand to state a few. Advantage for India is that along with treatment it also gives spiritual healing and alternative medicine like yoga, siddha etc which is not offered by countries like South Korea, Malaysia, UAE, Thailand etc.



The Cost Advantage for Medical Tourists Coming to India

Medical procedure	India	Thailand	Malaysia	Singapore	Turkey	S. Korea
Heart Bypass	7900	15000	12100	17200	13900	26000
Angioplasty	5700	4200	8000	13400	4800	17700
Heart Valve Replacement	9500	17200	13500	16900	17200	39900
Hip Replacement	7200	17000	8000	13900	13900	21000
Hip Resurfacing	9700	13500	12500	16350	10100	19500
Knee Replacement	6600	14000	7700	16000	10400	17500
Spinal Fusion	10300	9500	6000	12800	16800	16900
Dental Implant	900	1720	1500	2700	1100	1350
Lap Band	7300	11500	8150	9200	8600	10200
Gastric Sleeve	6000	9900	8400	11500	12900	9950
Gastric Bypass	7000	16800	9900	13700	13800	10900
Hysterectomy	3200	3650	4200	10400	7000	10400
Breast Implants	3000	3500	3800	8400	4500	3800
Rhinoplasty	2400	3300	2200	2200	3100	3980
Rhytidectomy	3500	3950	3550	440	6700	6000
Liposuction	2800	2500	2500	2900	3000	2900
Abdominoplasty	3500	5300	3900	4650	4000	5000
Lasik (both eyes)	1000	2310	3450	3800	1700	1700
IVF Treatment	2500	4100	6900	14900	5200	7900

Low price
 Moderate price
 High price

Table 4: Price of medical procedures across major destination countries in USD

Source: Medical Tourism Association, 2019

Future of Medical Tourism

In practical terms of economics a heart bypass can be done at \$7000 in India where as it costs close to \$140000 in any leading hospitals in USA. This is feasible mainly because of the investment by private players in the health industry. As far as the investment on infrastructure is concerned the least investment is done in this sector. There need to be a helping hand of the government in these investments.

- Medical visa should be given on arrival to make the process of medical tourism easy. The process can be handed over to tourism providers for medical tourism.
- The poorer countries can be given cheaper health care by Indian hospitals which can be a greater service and simultaneously helping the neglected countries people.

While we are thinking of expanding the medical tourism we do face competition from countries like Malaysia, Thailand, Turkey, Singapore, Mexico, Costa Rica etc to name a few, Thailand specializes on cosmetic surgeries and gives treatment in the field of oncology, cardiology etc on subsidized rates. Following the traditional Chinese medicine Malaysia is the cheap destination for fertility and orthopedic related treatments. Turkey is popular for hair transplants, organ transplants, and reconstructive surgeries. They offer all inclusive services which covers accommodation, after care and also no waiting for the treatment of foreigners. Countries like Turkey, Costa Rica and Mexico gives treatment at almost half of the cost of treatment in US. With the top medical facility Brazil renders the top ended service for cosmetic/ reconstructive surgeries at 40-60 percent less than US. The new countries who are emerging in this field are Dubai, Czech, Abu Dhabi, Germany, Israel, Iran, Taiwan etc. It is imminent on the part of Indian Government to focus on this rather than keeping them as a mere policy matter. Cuba has a success story due to privatization of health care and centralized marketing thru SERVIMED. The foreigners for medical tourism from Bangladesh have increased from 23.6% in 2009 to 57.5% in 2019. India also has a visit of 1.3 million tourists from countries like UK, USA and Canada other than the visitors from the neighboring countries.



Encash the Opportunity

The opportunities don't always come and knock at the door. The tourism industry has realized the need of shift from the traditional heritage and cultural form. India has the major migration of doctors and nurses to countries all over the world. Not with standing this a Public Private Partnership to encash the new opportunity by creating infrastructure and attracting the medical tourists is the need of the hour. If we need to win over most of the countries mentioned above the right time is now. Pandemic has shown the realities of facility we have, we need and what we can offer to the world. Coming to the facilities of medical tourism in Bangalore, it is essential to concentrate the facility around the airport and the New Bangalore of 10000 acres coming near Devanahalli. There are almost 15 major players in medical fields running hospitals in Bangalore. Irrespective of their major clientele and the base of their strategy there seem to be a lackadaisical approach towards medical tourism. India and especially Karnataka is yet to explore the possibilities to its high potential. The Pandemic has seen thru the problems of Medical Service requirement and also the need for the hotels for the accommodating patients and their attendants. The state of Karnataka has seen more of spending to private hospitals on health care by people. Private hospitals are visited by 86% of outpatients and 60% inpatients.

Modern Medical City Concept

In the world of new economy, the concept of medical city is gaining momentum. These concepts adopt advanced technologies by incorporating clinical services with diagnostic and therapeutic treatments. It is a challenge to implement these new models on medical tourism. But given the scope and potentials it is bound to have different character for different cities. It is essential to have a high level of demand of advanced level of medical care and sustainability. Together with medical care they also combine studies & research institute for academic work and training purposes. With high volume of people in such cities it also involves establishing nonmedical services like accommodation, hotels, transportation and other facilities along with medical city since they need to cover the requirements of supporting staff combined with patients and visitors. While this creates lots of opportunities and resources for medical tourism, it is essential to consider the governmental support on infrastructure and the scope of insurance for such health system. The payment factor and the performance need to be considered while planning for such medical city projects.

Medical Care City in Aerocity of Karnataka

Having analyzed the advantages and the challenges of Medical Tourism in Karnataka along with the resources of medical facilities a Concept of Medical Care City next to the Airport is thought off. Since most of the hospitals are located in the city, It is a real problem to commute inside the crowded city and the foreign medical tourists have to travel longer distance to reach the hospitals. In emergency cases time being the major factor, an alternative is to be found. With the new airport area expanding with almost 10000 acres, an identified medical care city for health care is workable and will be beneficiary for the locals in the New Bangalore and also for the medical tourism. The existing hospitals in Bangalore who are well versed with the medical tourism can extend their set up next to airport and the government on its share can give a helping hand in clearance and setting up control centre for linking with various Hospitalet as a startup measure towards this concept. A dedicated Medical Centre in the Airport town with all type of facilities and areas of treatment need to be established with scope of expansion. To go beyond treatment and care the Karnataka Tourism Development Corporation can arrange tourism packages for the visitors and an additional care by giving healing touch through naturopathy, yoga and with AYUSH concepts to them. This will also expand the business of not only medical tourism but also the allied industries and services. The hotels and other facilities for various categories can be designed and designated which will take care of the visitors and local community too. The pandemic has shown us the necessity of hospitals to be linked with hospitality. This can be taken as a lesson and the Public Private Participation module can be implemented. Since medical tourism organizers are good at making packages with various offers, they can consider treatment and post treatment care with packages for local visits, healing factors for the people who accompany the patients and also it will be a cultural exchange with medical care. With increased participation from private sector self-sufficient hubs can evolve and thrive for innovation in the field.



On a second stage of this medical care city some of the hospitals have also come up with the concept of having medical care hubs at Hubli, Mysore and Mangalore linking with the hospitals of Bangalore & Government hospitals so that some of the medical tourists can be taken care by these for treatment and post treatment for natural healing at resorts linked to the hospitals at these hubs. The patients and their care takers can also have a leisure & cultural tour of Karnataka. There are also small hospitals owners who are keen to set up hospitals of their specialties in the medical care city next to airport where in a consortium of various facilities can be set up in a hospital complex. With this the participation can be by a few groups of hospitals rendering qualitative services in their domain. This will not only reduce the cost of setting up medical care city by one agency but also it will be easy to form the new hospital with latest technology and innovations with so many of the hands coming together for a state of art technology and features. Each agency can specialize in their area of activity consolidated by a forum formed by joint effort of tourism department, medical services department and private hospital agency representative. This will enhance the system with regulated control, easy processing and also a cordial system of understanding every one's role and importance while evolving with the new ventures.

Conclusion

Medical tourism is a new horizon in the tourism industry of India which is generating good opportunities in terms of revenue and jobs for the last two decades. The growth of Asian countries in this sector is higher compared to other western countries. Given the scope of requirement of medical care and the insurance agencies taking advantage of the situation there need to be a relook by government and the private players to come on a common platform to work out a formula for setting such hospitals next to airport and also at other places. Karnataka being one among the major hub in India is yet to expand. Along with health tourism we need to take care of wellness like Yoga and naturopathy. Companies should tie up with insurance companies to tap the segment. Not only the medical services, the allied services and facilities also need to grow and improve their holding for an overall growth of tourism industry. Given the infrastructure of Kerala they are able to encase 5-7 percent of medical tourism revenue and aiming to reach 10-12 percent. With a well-established network Karnataka can deliver better results if the resources and minds are put in the right place for a long term perspective. The opportunities are on the rise due to increase in demand and life style change.

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