



Emerging trends of Medical Tourism in India: Changing scenario and future outlook

¹ Dr Mamta Bansal, ² Colonel Rahul Chauhan, ³ Dr Mandeep Narang

¹ Associate Professor, Head of Department, Hospital Administration, Shri Guru Ram Rai University Dehradun, India.

² Colonel, Indian Army, MHA 3rd semester, Department of Hospital Administration, Shri Guru Ram Rai University Dehradun, India.

³ Assistant Professor, Department of Hospital Administration, Shri Guru Ram Rai University Dehradun, India

Introduction

1. Medical Tourism involves combining of cost effective private medical facility in collaboration with Tourism industry for the patients who require superior, surgical, specialized, medical care and therapy. It entails people travelling to different places to receive treatment for diseases, ailments, conditions and seeking quality care at a lower cost. The patients have better access to health care than they would receive at their respective country [1]. Medical Tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors in the Indian economy and India has established itself as a pioneer and a hub of global Medical Tourism.

Medical Tourism

2. Medical tourism involves synergised integration of Tertiary sectors with healthcare. It also widens the scope of medical services to include varied categories of medical and allied services.

3. **Scope of work.** The scope of work in Medical tourism is spread across a wide arena of services and sectors. Success of Medical Tourism industry is dictated by the efficacy of these sectors to attract foreign tourists:

- Medical Services
- Transportation and Travel
- Tourism Industry
- Shopping and Entertainment
- Insurance sector
- Information Technology and Digitalization

4. **Classification of Medical services.** Activities under the ambit of Medical Tourism has been broadly classified in various categories [2], reference National Strategy and Roadmap for Medical and Wellness Tourism, January 2022:

- **Medical treatment and Healthcare.** These include treatment for curative purpose. Some of the popular healthcare facilities being solicited in India includes Cardiac surgery, Organ transplant, Hip and knee replacement, Bone marrow transplant, Neurosurgery, Oncology, Dental and Eye procedures, Renal and liver transplant and Pre and post Natal services.
- **Allied Medical services and Enhancement.** These services are for aesthetics purpose and not disease related. Major services being offered includes facelift, Breast and cosmetics surgeries and Liposuction.

- **Wellness and Rejuvenation.** Alternate Therapies aimed at wellness, rejuvenation and better lifestyle. These include Spa treatment, thermal and water treatment, Acupuncture and Aroma therapy, Beauty care and facial, Exercise and diet, Herbal healing and naturopathy, Reiki and Sound therapy.
- **Traditional system of medicine.** Access to traditional system of medicines to provide alternate care and to promote traditional system of medicine such as AYUSH viz Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Sidha and Homeopathy. India with its diverse and rich heritage of traditional medicine is the only country to provide such healthcare as a package of Medical Tourism.
- **Telemedicine.** Digitization and use of MVT Portal for providing second opinion or ongoing consultations before and after treatment.
- **Fertility.** India has emerged as a nodal centre for IVF, Fertility treatment and Surrogacy.

History of Medical services and Tourism

5. Organised Medical training began with the opening of first medical college in Kolkata in 1835, followed by a school in Mumbai in 1845 and one in Chennai in 1850[3]. Since Independence considerable progress has been achieved in the promotion of health care and services in India. The nineties witnessed liberalization, privatization and globalization of the medical care sector which provided the much-needed impetus to the health industry in general and medical tourism in particular. The Internet came along in the late nineties and modern Medical Tourism was born in India. Medical Tourism received a major boost in 2002 with the announcement of the National Health Policy of 2002. In 2014 Government commenced the E-Tourist visa and in 2018 a dedicated fund of INR 5000 crore was setup for enhancing the 12-champion service sector [2].

Present scenario

6. Medical Tourism in India was estimated to be worth USD 5-6 Billion in 2019. The segment is expected to grow to USD 13 Billion by 2022-23. In 2017 India was ranked 7th in the top 20 Wellness Tourism market globally and 3rd in the top ten wellness tourism market in Asia-Pacific. India has around 37 Joint Commission International (JCI) accredited hospitals as well as 513 National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare providers (NABH) accredited hospitals. The number of Foreign Tourist Arrival (FTA) in India on medical Visa grew to an estimated 6,97,000 in 2019 from 4,95,056 in 2017. India's medical visitors are primarily from the Indian Subcontinent. Majority of the patients are from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Oman, Bangladesh, Maldives, Iraq, Kenya and Nigeria. Recently the patients from the European Union have increased significantly thereby contributing to the industry and the economy [4]. (Source Niti Ayog report on Investment Opportunities in Health sector).

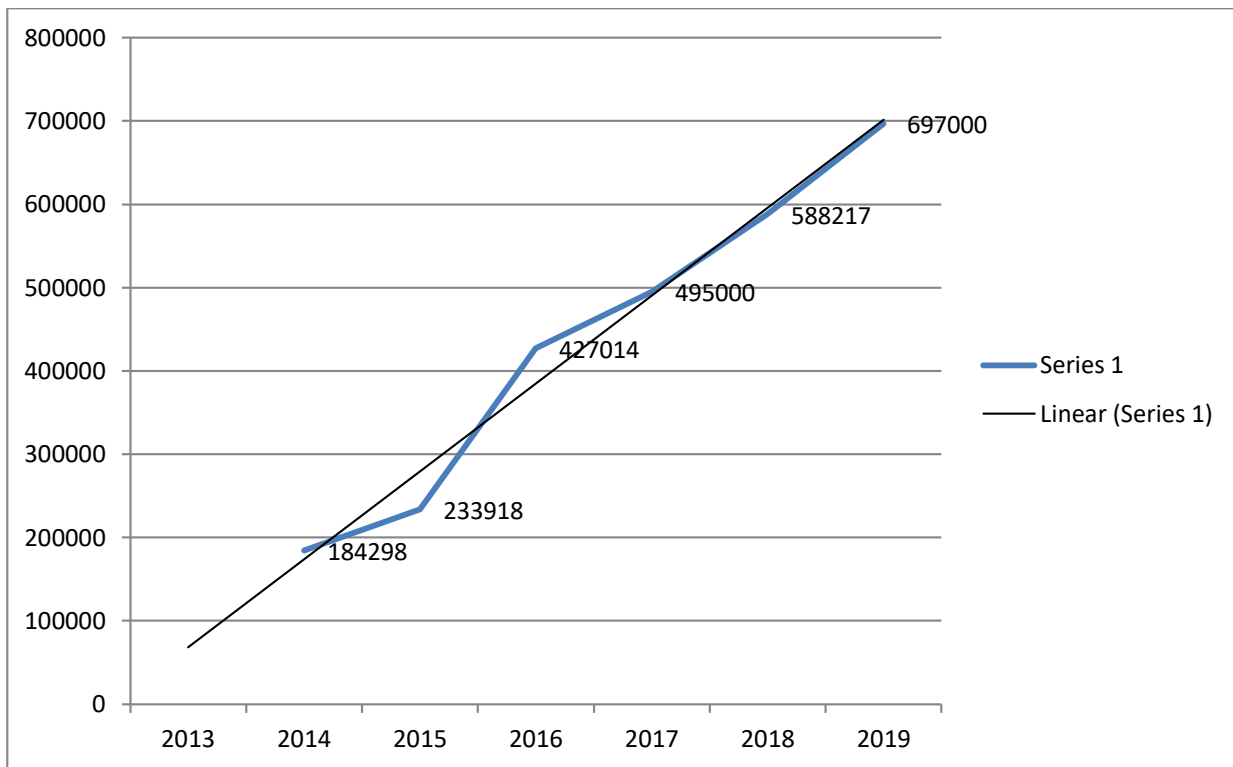
7. Future Market Insight Report on Indian market outlook and Medical Tourism market dated October 2022 values the Industry at USD 7417 million in 2022 and is projected to surpass USD 42,237.47 million by 2032. The report pegs the demand to grow at 19% CAGR from 2022 to 2032. As on date Indian Medical Tourism accounts for approximately 6.5% of the global medical tourism market [5].

8. Prices of common medical procedures across major destinations (India, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Turkey and South Korea) [4]:

Medical Procedure cost USD	India	Lowest Price	Highest Price
Heart Bypass	7900	7900/India	26000/S Korea
Angioplasty	5700	4200/Thailand	17700/S Korea

Heart Valve Replacement	9500	9500/India	39900/S Korea
Hip Replacement	7200	7200/India	21000/S Korea
Hip Resurfacing	9700	9700/India	19500/S Korea
Knee Replacement	6600	6600/India	17500/S Korea
Spinal Fusion	10300	6000/Malaysia	16900/S Korea
Dental Implant	900	900/India	2700/Singapore
Lap Band	7300	7300/India	11500/Thailand
Gastric Sleeve	6000	6000/India	12900/Turkey
Gastric Bypass	7000	7000/India	16800/Thailand
Hysterectomy	3200	3200/India	10400/Singapore
Breast Implant	3000	3000/India	8400/Singapore
Rhinoplasty	2400	2200/Malaysia	3980/S Korea
Rhytidectomy	3500	440/Singapore	6700/Turkey
Liposuction	2800	2500/Thailand	3000/Turkey
Abdominoplasty	3500	3500/India	5300/Thailand
Lasik (Both eye)	1000	1000/India	3800/Singapore
IVF Treatment	2500	2500/India	14900/Singapore

9. Growth of Foreign Tourist Arrival (FTA) since 2013 [4].



Major Challenges:

10. Major challenges affecting the growth of the sector and factors meriting strategic consideration for making India a global leader in Medical Tourism [7].

- Increased competition from countries like Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Turkey and South Korea.
- Lack of synergy, cohesion, development between various service sectors and their components.
- Lack of awareness and publicity campaign to develop the industry. Highlighting and giving Brand value to the services.
- Greater transparency to overcome Ethical and Legal bottlenecks.
- Regulation of activities of the private hospitals to ensure greater accountability and patient satisfaction.
- Streamlining Insurance sector to cater to international patients and their needs.
- Enhancing trust by quality accreditations of Indian hospitals and medical service providers.
- Promoting India as a Tourist destination.
- Infrastructure development to include surface transport and Aviation sector.
- Stable Political conditions, congenial and safe environment for tourists.
- Development of Information system and Portals to backup operations.
- Accreditations and enforcement of highest international standards.
- Targeting patients from developed nations and European Union by offering world class facilities at a lower cost.

Future Road Map.

11. The future road map of this sector will be dependent on the undermentioned factors.

- Development of Alternate and Traditional system of medicines with greater access to AYUSH programmes
- Highlighting the benefits of Yoga and India as the only destination.
- Greater Publicity and Advertisement.
- Use of strong and robust IT sector for ease of accessibility, managing of portals and Telemedicine.
- Reduction in taxes to compete with other nations.

- Enhancing the coverage of E- visa/ Medical Visa to more countries.
- Using Pharma Industry as as soft power to popularise Medical Tourism.
- Development of medical infrastructure and provision of state-of-the-art techniques and equipment backed by skilled service provider.

Conclusion

12. The development of the Aviation sector has greatly reduced the geographical barrier and made travel easy and affordable. This factor coupled with growing Hospitality Industry has provided the much-needed impetus to the medical tourism industry. The advancement in the field of medical sciences and R&D programmes have further brought the advantages of economies of scale. The strong IT industry provides a much-needed robust backbone to the development of the health care services. Collaborations in the Insurance sector and enhanced Foreign Direct Investment have also contributed towards state-of-the-art technology and services for the patients. Role of the Government in Promoting Alternate Medicines and ensuring development of the Tertiary sector has also ensured Indian dominance in the industry.

References

1. <https://tourism.gov.in>. Wellness and Medical Tourism, Ministry of Tourism. [accessed May 16, 2023]
2. National Strategy and Roadmap for Medical and Wellness Tourism. Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, January 2022. [accessed on 18 May]
3. <https://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov>. Evolution of Medical Education in India, National Centre of Biotechnology Information, National Library of Medicine. [accessed May 25, 2023]
4. Sarwal R; Prasad U; Madangopal K; Kalal S; Kaur D; Kumar A; Regy P; Sharma J. Investment Opportunities in India's Healthcare Sector. NITI Aayog. March 2021. [accessed on 20 May 2023]
5. <https://www.futuremarketinsights.com/reports/india-medical-tourism-market>. Future Market Insight Report on Indian market outlook and Medical Tourism market dated October 2022. [accessed on 24 May 2023]
6. Natraj. G, Muralitharan. N. Medical Tourism in India: Challenges and way forward post the Pandemic. [accessed on 30 May 2023] [IIPA Digest, April-June 2021]