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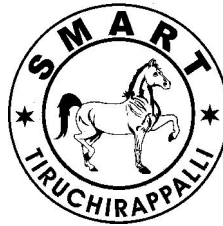
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WORLD CLASS TREATMENT AT THIRD WORLD PRICES IN INDIA

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Globalization has really opened many vistas for India to emerge as a 'CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE' in the field of Health Care. Health forms the basis and foundation upon which the individual's aspiration, achievements and dreams are converted into reality. Money may be the key for good health and it is true in the case of Medical Tourism

Meaning of Medical Tourism

According to Amit Sen Gupta, Medical Tourism can be broadly defined as "provision of cost effective private medical care in collaboration with the Tourism Industry, for patients needing surgical and other forms of specialized treatment". The little Pakistan girl, NOOR FATIMA, who came to India for operation at Bangalore really added one more feather to India's 'Health Care Excellence'.

Medical Tourism

There is every reason to say and believe that Medical Tourism is not quite foreign to India and it is not an entirely new concept. In the distant past, many foreigners and NRIs had been coming for rejuvenation purpose either to Kerala or Goa or both. In the past, it was an individual proposition and now it is institutionalized. Patients are routed to Indian hospitals of repute from foreign countries.

Medical Tourism - Scope in India

Apollo Hospital, a major corporate player in this industry, is the pioneer and forerunner in MEDICAL TOURISM and has treated many patients from Middle East, South Africa, Southern Asia, Bangladesh, Tanzania, Mauritius, Sri Lanka and

Dubai. Escorts, yet another corporate group, has also treated more than 1000 patients. In order to get a sizeable number of patients registered in the National Health Services from UK, the Ruby Hospital at Kolkata signed a contract with one British insurance company, BUPA.

The growth in this industry has significantly contributed to the life expectancy to increase from 41.3 years in 1951 to 62.9 years in 1999-2000. Indian health care is not only well known for allopathy but also pioneer in other systems of medicine such as Ayurveda, Homoeopathy, Unani and Siddha.

Indian hospital industry, insurance companies, Third Party Administrators, have started realizing the niche market in this nascent industry, which came to limelight with the arrival of NOOR FATIMA, through Indo-Pakistan bus service, for her treatment at the hospital in Bangalore. Foreign visitors in and around Chennai who hail from USA and UK and Gulf Countries, have realized and preferred the excellence in Indian corporate hospital care.

The demand for cost effective specialized health care comes from the developed countries, where the life expectancy and communicable and contagious diseases and emergency cases require immediate health care and super specialty care. Hence, it is implied that MEDICAL TOURISM in India could be addressed and dealt with by large specialist hospitals run by corporate entities. This may motivate them to undertake and expand the medical facilities. At this juncture, it would be appropriate to state that Charaka, a renowned

Ayurvedic physician said, "Health is vital for ethical, artistic, material and spiritual development of man".

Once the Government of India takes a concrete step, it will lead to a flood of patients in the Indian hospitals. Dr. Ramakanta Panda, CEO, Asian Heart Institute and Research Center, observes that the introduction of medical visa has been the offshoot of the rising medical tourism in our country. He further adds that this will further boost the influx of international patients since medical treatment in India is considered to be of high quality at reasonable cost. A case study done by Confederation of Indian Industries has revealed that Thailand with a population of 60 million is so successful in attracting one million health tourist last year because of the development of the world-class health care infrastructure. Confederation of Indian Industries also believes that India should also replicate the Thai model and capitalize on our inherent strength to become the world destination in Medical Tourism. However Confederation of Indian Industries cautions that it is also essential to establish the Indian health care brand synonymous with safety, trust and center of excellence.

Number of Hospitals and medical Practitioners

India is proud of having not less than 179 Medical Colleges, which are spread out through out the length and breadth of our Country. The total number of civilian hospitals as per the data provided in 1989 by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare was 10,157 but beds in 1991 increased to 8,11,000.

There is a saying which states that 'fortune knocks once in everyman's gate' and it is now for Indian hospital industry to make use of the golden opportunity. Against the background of long waiting list in the UK and uninsured and partially insured patients in USA, hospital industry in India can rise up to the occasion and

perform well for the mutual benefits of both the provider country and the receiver countries of medical services.

Medical Tourism and Leading Countries

The following countries have evinced a lot of interest and have already promoted Medical Tourism in the recent past. The pioneers in this are Greece, Philippines, Singapore, South Africa, Malaysia and Jordan. India is a new entrant in Medical Tourism.

Scope of Medical Tourism in India

According to CII, Mc-Kinsey report predicts that the Medical Tourism business in India could be \$1 billion business by 2012. But the Government of India predicts this to be \$ 17 billion, with a growth rate of 13%. Analysts say that not less than 1,50,000 medical tourists came to India last year. There is another statistics which suggest that the Medical Tourism Industry in India is worth \$333 million. Once the trickle of foreign patients started coming to India for treatment, soon it may prove to be a gold mine for the Medical Tourism industry. The scope of Medical Tourism in India is so vast on account of the following reasons.

Irrespective of the country from which the medical tourists originate, they feel homely in India and the question of communication problem does not arise. Indian doctors are well versed in English and combined with Indian hospitality, Indians are second to none in the Care Industry.

Yet another contributing and conducive factor for Medical Tourism in India is that 10% of the medical professionals in USA and UK are Indian medical professionals. Since they have proved their worth, it may result in more leverage to Medical Tourism. Our Indian doctors in USA and UK act as conduit pipes and ambassadors for the growth and promotion of Medical Tourism in India.

Ms. Michelle Carroll, Director, Team Health Care (European Operations), has stated in the Business Line, dated 01.10.2005, that US is currently facing a shortage of about 8 lakh nurses and the number is 80,000 to 1,20,000 in the UK. Above all, our 'Hospital Angels', the nurses, are the most preferred ones through out the whole world. In view of the abnormal demands, the Team Health Care World (THW), a wholly owned subsidiary of the US based Innovative Health Care Group Incorporation (IHG), has adopted a model to promote its venture of staffing nurses to the US and UK markets. Thus our 'Angels of Hospital' may prove to be the potential source for the promotion of Medical Tourism.

Prominent Player in the Industry

Though there are many players in the industry, some of the players in the industry are worth mentioning.

1. Apollo Hospital -New Delhi
2. Tata Memorial Hospital – Mumbai
3. All India Institute of Medical Sciences – New Delhi
4. Christian Medical College-Vellore
5. Wockhart Hospital - Bombay
6. B.M . Birla Heart Research Center – Kolkata
7. Arvind Eye Hospital – Madurai
8. Sri Ramachandra Medical Centre–Chennai
9. Apollo Hospital –Chennai
10. Breach Candy Hospital – Mumbai
11. Manipal Hospital – Bangalore
12. Escorts Hospital –New Delhi

In a way, the above-mentioned hospitals may be considered and branded as the 'Leaders of Health Care Enablers' and the flagship of health care industry in India.

Hurdles in The Highway of Progress of Medical Tourism

Every coin has two sides and this analogy applies to Medical Tourism. Hurdles are

omnipresent and it is up to the individual to overcome. We may have to clear all hurdles in the highway to our progress and achievements. In the promotion of Medical Tourism in India, the following may appear to be the short-term impediments.

Road Border in Medical Tourism

1. Longer waiting time
2. Medico – legal jurisdictions
3. Post operative care of patients
4. Objection to the medical practitioners by the respective countries.
5. Government incentives and sops
6. Medical negligence and subsequent liability
7. Heavy compensation claims
8. Medical Insurance coverage
9. Medical Insurance Agency – conditions

Government Initiative Towards medical Tourism

It is heartening to note that the Union Health Minister is seeking to obtain funds for the establishment of six Regional Hospitals to be set up on the pattern of All India Institute of Medical Science at New Delhi in the states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Chattisgarh, Rajsathan and Uttaranchal as well.

Health and Tourism are upcoming industries and growing segment in marketing with "Incredible India". Here, not only the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India but also the private sector consisting of travel agents, tour operators, hospitality companies and other allied agencies are eyeing health and medical tourism as a segment with tremendous potential for improvement. To promote Medical Tourism in India, Government of India has come out with medical visas for foreign tourists for specialized treatments. The issuance of medical visa will be useful for those who come for long term complicated procedures like knee replacement, cardiac surgery, organ

transplant, cosmetic plastic surgery, dental surgery, and congenital diseases.

Government of India has introduced various policy measures to promote Medical Tourism in India by the National Health Policy, recognizing the treatment of international patients as an export, which results in lower import duty, increases depreciation allowance from 25 % to 40% for life saving medical equipments along with several other tax sops.

Indian Health Care “ Centre of Excellence”

Buddha once said that “of all the gains, the gains of health are the highest and the best”. In India, many corporate hospitals with multi specialty facilities and super specialty have excelled in one or two areas, such as

1. Cardiology
2. Ophthalmology
3. Bye pass Surgery
4. Transplants
5. Open Heart Surgery
6. Gynecology
7. Cardio –Vascular Diseases
8. Pulmonology
9. Orthopedic Surgery
10. Neurosurgery
11. Gastroenterology
12. Neurosurgery
13. Oncology

In addition to the above, all the medical investigations are done through state of the art diagnostic equipments.

Cost Effective Medical Tourism

The emergence of medical tourism is the result of cost effective treatment and it is the major selling point. There may be many reasons for India to become a Health Care Destination. But the main reason for its emergence as a Bye Pass Surgery Center of Excellence could only be its cost effectiveness. To cite an example, it is estimated that while it would cost about \$30,000

to get a heart surgery done in USA, THE SAME COULD BE DONE HERE IN INDIA FOR ABOUT \$6,000. Similarly, bone marrow transplant may cost about \$2,50,000 in USA, and the same could be performed at \$26,000, and not to speak of the waiting time in UK and US. Other things remaining constant, the low cost medical treatment, with the state of the art and efficiency of the Indian Medical Practitioners are the major cause for the rise in Medical Tourism over the past few years.

Further, Confederation of Indian Industries is of the opinion that India could offer a unique holistic medical service, with Yoga, Meditation, Unani, Siddha, Ayurveda, Allopathic, which is very difficult for other countries to market. Further, hospital billing works out to one-tenth of the UK prices and one-fifth of the USA prices. Since Indian physicians and surgeons are internationally reputed, sincere and dedicated, there is large scope for better marketing of Medical Tourism Industry in India.

Thus the “WORLD CLASS TREATMENT AT THIRD WORLD PRICES” IS QUITE POSSIBLE IN INDIA ONLY, IN COMPARISION TO OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD.

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