

Management of Significant Factors Involved in Medical Tourism

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Abstract

Abstract: Nowadays many people travel abroad for receiving the medical care, as there exists innovative medical treatment procedures which are available in very few developed countries. This process can be termed as “Medical Tourism”. The patient with a particular disease seeking for the medical treatment will look for the more efficient treatment procedure where the patient can be cured within a less period of time and at minimum cost. Increase in popularity of “medical tourism” have captured the attention of researchers, media and the policy makers. The role of Internet and travel industries matters a lot in “medical tourism” process, as the people will look for the closest destination to travel for the treatment which will reduce the transportation cost. Cost, quality and the type of treatments along with the guidelines for medical tourists are considered to be the major factors of medical tourism which are discussed in this paper.

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I. INTRODUCTION:

The term “Medical tourism” describes the process of travelling outside the residential country for receiving the medical treatment. More specifically, the term is referred to the travelling of the patients from the less developed countries to the developed countries for pursuing the medical treatment which are not available in the country in which they resides. In recent years, the patients are seeking for the healthcare services which can be offered at low prices, so they travel from richer to less developed countries. Such qualitative and the quantitative shifts within the patient mobility is driven by the relative low-cost of the treatments in less-developed countries, availability of flights within an affordable rate and increased marketing and online consumer information about the availability of the health-

care services. People visiting the other countries for the treatment will probably stay there for several days even after the end of their medical treatment for sightseeing and participating in various other tourism activities[1].

Cost:

Cost is the major factor which matters a lot in the process of “Medical tourism” for an individual those who are interested in the health-care services in abroad. The cost of the medical treatment services in US are very expensive, insurance companies and the employers’ opinion regarding the medical tourism is not considerable. Many nations in the world are seeking for the financial benefits aroused from the market, so they provide premium health-care services at reasonably lower rate. The main reason behind the

capability of nations of providing the medical services at lowest possible prices is directly related to the economic status of the country. The direct correlation with per capita gross domestic product of the country has been monitored which is termed as intermediary for income levels. As a result, surgery prices are from 20% to 60 % lower in the countries which are promoting medical tourism as compared to the US[2].

Quality:

Technical and serviceable quality are the two major aspects of the service quality in the medical service sector. Technical quality relates to the technical equipment used for diagnosing the patient and the service quality is related to the quality of services offered at the healthcare sectors which comprises of services of staffs, nurses and doctors offered to the patients in the clinic. The service quality in the medical tourism industry is an important aspect which results in fetching more number of customers[3].

There is need to build optimum marketing strategy through the accreditation from a recognized institute which emphasis the confidence in the health-care sector. Affiliation with the most reputed hospitals will strengthen this confidence. Once they are accredited and become an integral part of international referral networks, they can be appropriately rated for risk[4].

There are many type of treatment used for diagnosis of different kinds of diseases. The availability of this treatment represents an important factor in implementing the process of medical tourism. Most frequent medical procedures that patient undergo during trips of medical tourism are orthopaedic surgery, cardiac surgery, organ transplantation, dentistry and cosmetic surgery[5].

There exists numerous kinds of medical services which can be acquired by medical

tourism, starting from the significant treatments used for critical treatments to the different kinds of traditional and alternative treatments. The reproductive outsourcing of this types of services are increasing rapidly, which comprises the activity of travelling outside the residential country to pursue in surrogate pregnancy, “in vitro fertilization” and other reproductive technology frameworks[6].

Easy accessibility of these kind of services is also one of the considerable factor which is responsible for the growth of medical tourism. An appropriate technology should be available in the country for the treatment of the disease. Lack of accessibility of this technology can insist the people to move towards medical tourism[7].

Most of the patients who are seeking for medical care in the abroad pay for their treatment at the time of the services and more often they are totally dependent on the private companies or the “medical concierge services” to recognize foreign medical treatment facilities. An agreement has been made between the health insurance companies and the health care providers outside US to maintain the financial aspects[8].

Risk Factors associated with Medical Tourism:

There is possibility of risk emerging during the medical treatment, more specifically during the surgical procedures and many difficulties can be associated with the treatment procedure regardless of the place where the treatment is carried out. There might be a possibility of getting infected while performing the medical treatment which comprises of blood stream infections, donor-derived infections, and acquisition of blood borne pathogens consisting of hepatitis B and C and HIV. In some countries there are chances of acquiring “antibiotic-resistant infections” such as “carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae”.

Sudden occurrence of infectious diseases among the medical tourists have been gathered by many analysts and researchers for the study. A case of patient who underwent cosmetic surgery have been discovered at the surgical site where the infection was caused due to “nontuberculosis mycobacteria” and those patient received fetal sheep injections. The complications which are non-infectious found in medical tourists are same to those observed within the patients who receive the medical treatment in US and consists of blood clots, and counter abnormalities after the cosmetic surgery[9].

There might arise any kind of surgical complications during the treatment of the patient provided at the healthcare centre. So the medical tourists are requested to bring the copy of the prior medical records and hand over it to the healthcare providers for any follow-up care. There might be a risk associated with the travelling of the patient immediately after the surgery depending upon the patient’s medical health condition. Usually people use to travel by aeroplanes for receiving the medical treatment in abroad, which leads to potential risk of blood clotting for the patient, which also includes the risk of “deep vein thrombosis” or “pulmonary emboli”. The pressure level in the cabins of an aircraft is much equivalent to the ambient air pressure at 7000 to 9000 ft. above the sea level. There are certain restrictions for the patients or the medical terrorist who is going to have a chest or abdominal surgery, wherein restrictions include – the patient cannot travel by aeroplane for almost 12 days from the date of surgery.

The Plastic surgeons advises their patients who underwent cosmetic surgeries of nose, face, eyelids are who underwent laser treatments, to avoid travelling by aeroplane for almost 8 to 10 days. The “Aerospace Medical Association” has introduced the medical guidelines for the airline travel that provides essential data regarding the risks associated with the medical tourism. The

medical tourists are also advised to avoid the drinking alcohol, swimming, taking long tours, sunbathing, taking long hours, or performing any kinds of vocational activities that will critically affect the patient’s health after the surgery[10].

Medical tourist should take the advice of the travel medicine specialists usually before 3 to 5 weeks before the travelling time. They should also take the advice of their “primary care provider” regarding receiving the medical treatment in abroad. Proper check-up should be done before the time of travelling by taking the current health conditions of the patient into considerations. The patient should carry appropriate amount of medicines while travelling abroad to maintain their primary health conditions. They should be in touch with their primary health care providers by taking all routine vaccinations and consider immunization against “hepatitis B” virus before travel[11].

Advise medical tourists to seek prompt medical care, while still traveling or after returning home, if they suspect any complication. Encourage them to disclose information about travel history, medical history, and recent surgeries or medical treatments received during their trip. Seeking prompt medical care may lead to early diagnosis and treatment and a better outcome.

Important guidelines for Medical tourists:

Various associations have prepared standard guidelines for the medical tourists that provides a proper guidance to the patient who are seeking medical treatments outside their residential countries, wherein one of standard guidelines represented here in (Table 1) – guiding principles developed by “American medical Associations” which is related to the facility providing care, with the group facilitating the trip and their local health-care provider. The “American College of Surgeons” has acquired the same description on medical and surgeon tourism

with the further recommendations for the medical tourists to collect the complete set of their medical records before returning home to make sure that the record of the medical treatment is available to the providers in the residential country. This results in assisting the continuity of care.

1	"Medical care outside the United States must be voluntary."
2	"Financial incentives to travel outside the United States for medical care should not inappropriately limit the diagnostic and therapeutic alternatives that are offered to patients, or restrict treatment or referral options."
3	"Patients should only be referred for medical care to institutions that have been accredited by recognized international accrediting bodies (such as the Joint Commission International or the International Society for Quality in Health Care)."
4	"Prior to travel, local follow-up care should be coordinated and financing should be arranged to ensure continuity of care when patients return from medical care outside the United State."
5	"Coverage for travel outside the United States for medical care must include the costs of necessary follow-up care upon return to the United States."
6	"Patients should be informed of their rights and legal recourse before agreeing to travel outside the United States for medical care."
7	"Access to physician licensing and outcome data, as well as facility accreditation and outcomes data, should be arranged for patients seeking medical care outside the United States."
8	"The transfer of patient medical records to and from facilities outside the United States should be consistent with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Action (HIPAA) guidelines."
9	"Patients choosing to travel outside the United States for medical care should be provided with information about the potential risks of combining surgical procedures with long flights and vacation activities."

**Table 1 - Guiding principles developed by
"American medical Associations"**

II. LITERATURE SURVEY:

The literature study provides a brief description of the current analysis and research around the medical tourism, and its impact on the Australians. As patients are seeking for the

medical care outside their residential countries, especially in south-east Asia for the cosmetic surgery and the dental treatment which results in medico-legal and insurance issues along with the concerns regarding maintain the records of the patients which comprises of the travel health advice, regular check-up advice and many more[12].

As discussed herein, the study includes an overview and history of the medical tourism, wherein the industry analysis has been recorded, the media coverages and advertisements suggests the patient to visit abroad for the medical treatment by travelling a long distance, but most of the medical tourism is across nearby borders of Europe, the middle class Europeans can't afford to travel that much of distance for the medical treatment. So the significant factors regarding this issue have been discussed in this research paper [13].

Many popular icons of their respective countries along with the government are promoting for the medical tourist industry in the South-east Asia, but its several impacts on the health-care system has been not studied carefully, so this paper explain the significant factors that impact that affects the growth of medical tourism by discussing various cases of Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore [4]

The literature survey states the issues aroused on health and medical tourism, wherein the interrelationship between different sectors of medical tourism and health including the health-care tourism, dental tourism, abortion tourism, transplant tourism and xeno-tourism have been identified. This relates with the concept of maintaining health and dealing with the key factors that results in developing the diseases[6].

III. CONCLUSIONS:

Every person has a right to travel along any part of the world which includes some certain

restrictions of the country's permit to cross the border. Number of patients are seeking for the medical treatment outside their residential countries. Though there are certain risk factors associated with the medical tourism which are proved to be very essential for the medical tourists. So that the individual can be aware of the certain things which is needed to be consider while going for the treatment in abroad. Particular guidelines have been provided by the organizations such as "American medical Associations" which helps in maintaining the record of the medical treatment and avoid the potential risks which are associated with the medical tourism, wherein the several medical treatments are carried out. Factors associated with travelling of patient before and after the surgical treatment are also mentioned in this paper which are beneficial for the medical tourists.

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