



ISSN(Online): 2319-8753
ISSN (Print): 2347-6710

International Journal of Innovative Research in Science, Engineering and Technology

(A High Impact Factor, Monthly, Peer Reviewed Journal)

Visit: www.ijirset.com

Vol. 6, Issue 10, October 2017

Scope, Importance, Challenges and Problems of Medical Tourism in Northern Karnataka

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ABSTRACT: Medical tourism is a new form of niche tourism increasingly becoming popular in the current world and India has emerged as a popular destination for providing global standards of health care at affordable costs. North Karnataka is a good location to receive medical treatments and considered a leader in promoting medical tourism. Healthcare, like food and shelter, is a basic need of Humanity. Given the potential North Karnataka holds as a healthcare destination, several features have positioned North Karnataka as an ideal healthcare destination, like cost effective healthcare solutions, availability of skilled healthcare professionals, reputation for successful treatment in advanced healthcare segments, increasing popularity of its traditional wellness systems and rapid strides made in information technology. The sector is witnessing a 'reverse brain-drain' trend, with increasing number of specialists, who have been practicing abroad, showing keen interest to come back and practice in North Karnataka. Such developments further enhance the potential of North Karnataka as a 'healthcare hub' of the city. The North Karnataka medical tourism industry is currently at a budding stage, but has a massive potential for future development and progress. The sections of tourists from different parts of the cities travel to North Karnataka for traditional healthcare services such as ayurveda, naturopathy, and Yoga.

KEYWORDS: Medical Tourism, Health care, Medication Cost, Alternative Medicine

I. INTRODUCTION

Medical tourism is a new form of niche tourism increasingly becoming popular in the current world and India has emerged as a popular destination for providing Global standards of health care at affordable costs. North Karnataka is a good location to receive medical treatments and considered a leader in promoting medical tourism. Healthcare, like food and shelter, is a basic need of Humanity. Given the potential North Karnataka holds as a healthcare destination, the healthcare tourism sector can be a major source of foreign exchange earnings for the city. North Karnataka s healthcare sector has made impressive strides in recent years and the country is increasingly projected as a 'healthcare hub'. The northern region of Karnataka have major cities like Belagavi, Dharwad-Hubli, Vijayapur, Bagalkot, Gulbaruga, Bidar, Raichur, Haveri and Uttar Kannada are the best places for health care service, among which the Belagavi, a projected smart city of India, is dominant health care service provider. The sector is witnessing a 'reverse brain-drain' trend, with increasing number of specialists, who have been practicing abroad, showing keen interest to come back and practice in North Karnataka. Such developments further enhance the potential of North Karnataka as a 'healthcare hub' of the city. The sections of tourists from different parts of the cities travel to North Karnataka for traditional healthcare services such as ayurveda, naturopathy, and Yoga.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Muralidar Trivedi (2013) Since Yoga's birth (more than 5,000 years ago), medical travelers and students have trooped to India to learn more about Yoga and other forms of alternative medicine. India gained reputation as the center of Eastern cultural, spiritual, and medicinal progress when Buddhism came along 2,500 years later. And even when Western clinical medicine became more popular and credible, India remained the best destination for alternative medicine practitioners from all over the world.

Pankaj Mochi (2013) he said the key reason for India's emergence as an important destination for health care is due to Indian doctors who are renowned world over. There are over 35,000 specialty doctors of Indian origin in the US alone. Also, Indian nurses are the most sought after and their caring approach towards treatment is well recognized.

Mishra. R and K. Shailesh (2012) found that there are different opinions as to whether medical tourism is still a promising industry or had been considered firmly established. The industry is being followed and promoted by several trustworthy organizations, including the Medical Tourism Association (MTA), the Deloitte Center for health Solutions, and the Joint Commission International. India's Medical tourism is dominated by the private sector from the corporate houses.

Whittaker (2008) has said that opening up of the health sector trade under the General agreement of Trade in services (GATS) and increased corporatization of medicine with Asian countries are reasons for the growth of medical and health tourism in Asian countries.

Jain (2006) states that most patients from countries like the USA and UK travel to developing countries such as India for treatment because India offers some of the cheapest pricing options of treatment, offers a good holiday, and there are no waiting lists or queues to stand in.

John Connell (2006) 1 says that Medical tourism has grown rapidly during the past decade and several Asian countries have become dominant. Conventional Tourism has become a by-product of this growth, despite its tour packaging and overall benefits to travel industry have been considerable. Rise of medical tourism has emphasized privatization of health care due to accelerated globalization of both health care and tourism.

III. OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the status of medical tourism in Northern Karnataka
2. To assess the potential and growth and problems of medical tourism in Northern Karnataka
3. To study the cost-effectiveness of Medical treatment in Northern Karnataka

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research is descriptive and explorative in nature to meet the research objectives. The present study is based on secondary data and the information has been collected from various sources i.e. published research, web sites, newspapers, and the travel and tourism magazines that carry medical tourism related information.

V. GROWTH OF MEDICAL TOURISM IN NORTHERN KARNATAKA

Tourism combined with visit for medical treatment is called as medical tourism. Medical tourism is used often synonymously with health tourism, but however health tourism can be differentiated from medical tourism, where health and wellness tourism indicates travel for taking rejuvenation and alternative therapies and spas. Medical tourism

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encompasses primarily on bio-medical procedures combined with travel and tourism (Whittaker 2008). As the above factors are playing significant role in medical tourism it is a boon for Belgaum, Dharwad, Hubli, Gadag and Haveri to development medical tourism in this region. Belgaum, Dharwad and Hubli region has healthcare facilities at par with metros as far as primary and secondary healthcare is concerned. "The region has adequate infrastructure and human resource for treating any kind of disease, including Cancer. But facilities to conduct advanced operations related to cancer, cardiology, neurology, urology, orthopedic and pediatric are lacking," Understanding the demand for quality healthcare services, the government is encouraging private investments for building medical infrastructure with advanced treatment facilities. Such measures, though, have still not benefited the region but the process of pursuing corporate hospital chains to set-up facilities in the region is going on. Private medical institutions such as KLE Society's Hospital in Belgaum and SDM College of Medical Sciences and Hospital at Dharwad are known for their comparatively better facilities. "A super-specialty wing having 400 beds will come up in the next one year with an investment of `70 crores. The facility would be used for thoracic, neurology and plastic surgeries. This will be a state-of-the-art facility in this region. Hubli's Karnataka Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS) and hospital is considered the lifeline of North Karnataka for various treatments. Apart from Allopathic the twin cities are also housing Homeopathic, Ayurveda, Naturopathy centers and other type of medical facilities and many numbers of domestic tourists are utilizing the medical facilities. Publicity of Medical facilities will also attract the foreign tourists to this region. Present paper highlights the potential of Medical Tourism industry in Northern Karnataka.

Figure 1: the Medical Tourism structure in Northern Karnataka

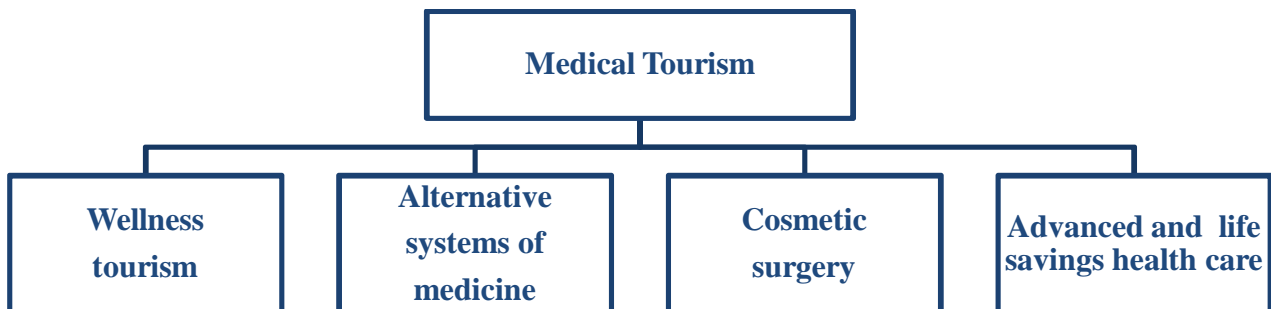


Table 1: Cost comparison between USA, India, and Karnataka (Approximated figures in US\$)

Procedure	USA	India	Karnataka
Heart bypass	1,30,000	10,000	9,000
Heart valve replacement	1,60,000	9,000	8,000
Angioplasty	57,000	11,000	10,000
Hip replacement	43,000	9,000	9,000
Hysterectomy	20,000	3,000	3,000
Knee replacement	40,000	8,500	7,000
Spinal fusion	62,000	5,500	5,000

Source: http://www.docstoc.com/docs/12163631/Medical_Tourism/P/36

Quality care, relatively cheaper services compared to the west, package Deals and cheap services from the tourism and hospitality sectors are the biggest attraction of medical tourism in India. The price differentials of various procedures for India and with the USA reveal the economic advantage offered to interested patients by Karnataka.

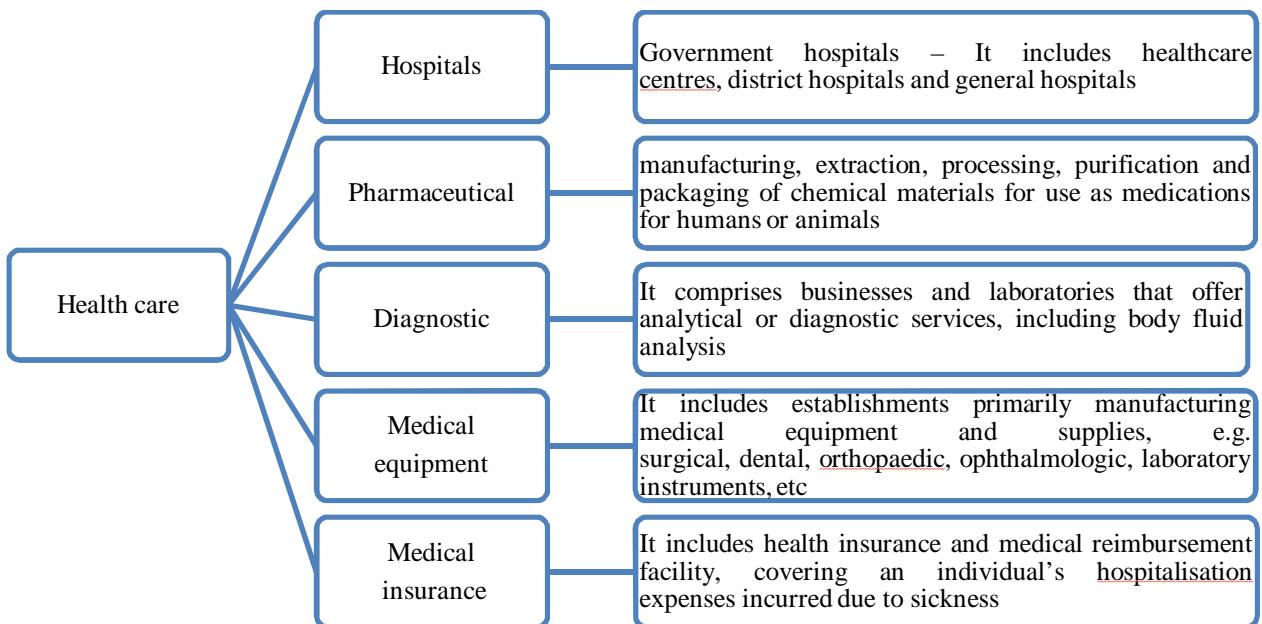
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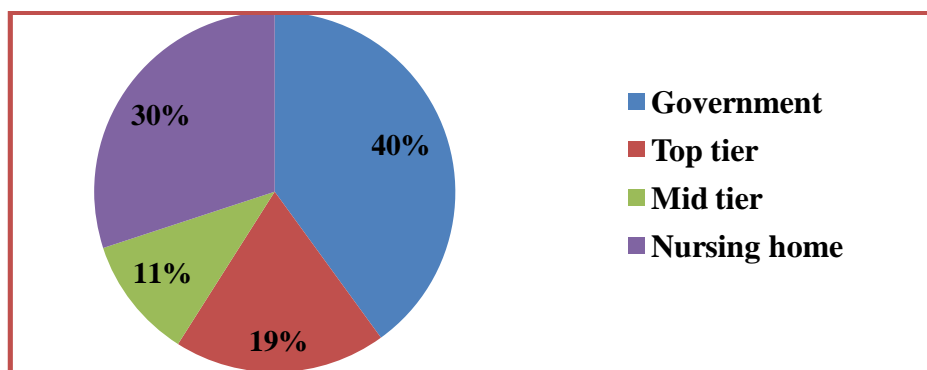
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Figure 2: The Health care Market Functions through Five Segments



Source: Hospital Market – Karnataka by Research Tech Sci. Research

Figure 3: Private sector has a strong presence in Northern Karnataka healthcare sector



Source: A report on 'Karnataka Hospital Services Market Outlook'

VI. PER CAPITA HEALTHCARE EXPENDITURE

Per capita healthcare expenditure is estimated at a CAGR of 5 per cent during 2008–15 to USD68.6 billion by 2015. This is due to rising incomes, easier access to high-quality healthcare facilities and greater awareness of personal health and hygiene. Greater penetration of health insurance aided the rise in healthcare spending, a trend likely to intensify in the coming decade. Economic prosperity is driving the improvement in affordability for generic drugs in the market.

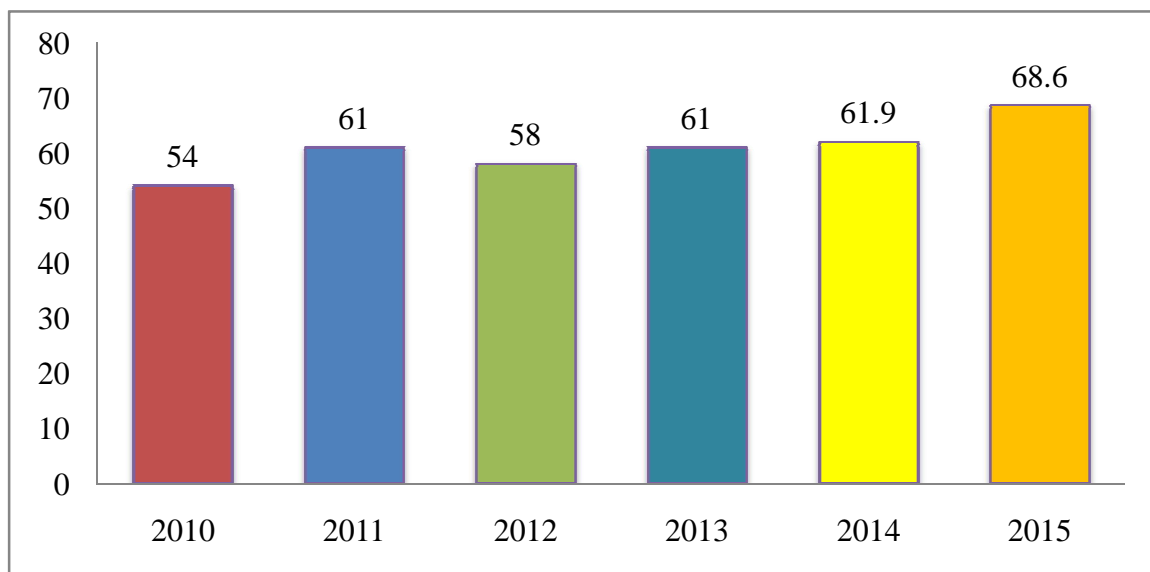
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Figure 4: Per-capita healthcare expenditure (USD)



Source: World Bank, BMI Report, Tech Sci Research

VII. LIFESTYLE DISEASES AND GROWING AWARENESS TO INCREASE HOSPITALIZATION

The purported rise of lifestyle diseases in India is expected to boost industry sales figures. Increased incidences such as heart disease, obesity and diabetes have contributed to rising healthcare spending by individuals. Growing health awareness and precautionary treatments coupled with improved diagnostics are resulting in an increase in hospitalisation. Indian system of healthcare, Ayurveda has unique therapies which are beneficial for treatment of many chronic lifestyle disorders and thus attracting more number of patients to avail these services in India. CAGR of hospitalised cases from 2008 to 2015.

Cardiac – 18 per cent

Oncology – 16 per cent

Diabetes – 19 per cent

VIII. A NEW GROWTH FACTOR FOR NORTHERN KARNATAKA'S HEALTHCARE SECTOR

Presence of world class hospitals and skilled medical professionals has strengthened Northern Karnataka's position as a preferred destination for medical tourism. Superior quality healthcare, coupled with low treatment costs in comparison to other countries. Treatment for major surgeries in India costs approximately 20 per cent of that in developed countries. Northern Karnataka also attracts medical tourists from developing nations due to Lack of advanced medical facilities in many of these countries. Yoga, meditation, ayurveda, allopathy and other traditional methods of treatment are major service offerings that attract medical tourists from other states of India.

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IX. CHALLENGES FACED BY MEDICAL TOURISM IN NORTHERN KARNATAKA

1. Commercialization of the profession is one point which some doctors are not comfortable since the personal doctor-patient relationship will be missing.
2. There is recuperation for patients who avail of treatment abroad. While cosmetic or dental surgery might not require extensive aftercare, orthopedic or heart bypass surgery might require the patient to be under post-treatment observation for some time, this would be best under the doctor who has treated him and who is fully aware of his condition.
3. There is the issue of insurance cover, insurance companies in developed cities provide cover for treatment availed of in other cities only when the standard of services is the same as the patient's home city. Some cities provide insurance cover only for treatment taken in their city.
4. Poor power supply even to hospitals.
5. No Industry standards followed in hospitals.
6. Inequalities in the medical services provided by Government and private hospitals will increase.
7. Brain drain from government sector to private sector.
8. Increase in medical costs for local people.

X. CONCLUSION

Northern Karnataka is in an advantageous position to tap the global opportunities in the medical tourism sector. The government's role is crucial to the development of medical tourism. The government should take steps in the role of a regulator and also as a facilitator of private investment in healthcare. Mechanisms need to be evolved to enable quicker visa grants to foreign tourists for medical purposes where patients can contact the Immigration Department at any point of entry for quick clearance. Tax incentives to the service providers import duty reduction on medical equipment, committees to promote and foster medical tourism are some of the initiatives that can be undertaken. There is also a need to develop supporting infrastructure such as transport services to facilitate tourism in Northern Karnataka. The tourism, health, information and communication departments need to work in tandem for efficient patient care. This paper has recommended some of the medical tourism strategies for further promoting medical tourism in Northern Karnataka. These include building and promoting the image of Northern Karnataka as high quality medical tourism destination, creating and promoting new combination of medical tourism products, keeping up the high standard of quality treatments at a reasonable price, providing informative online and offline materials and make them available to the potential customers.

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