

# **SCOPE OF MEDICAL TOURISM IN INDIA**

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## **ABSTRACT:**

India is among the fastest growing medical tourism destinations in the world. Medical Tourism is broadly defined as the act of travelling to obtain medical care in another country or region of the same country where specialised treatment is given to the patients at affordable cost without waiting for long time. India has become one of the main hub of Medical Tourism in the world. There are several reasons like availability of world class technology and procedures, world class doctors and nurses at a very less cost. This type of tourism has boosted India's economy and increased its forex. Having vast scope for Medical Tourism, there is a need to explore this potential in full strength.

**KEY WORDS:** CUTTING EDGE TECHNOLOGY, FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT, MEDICAL VISAS, SOFTWARE INDUSTRY, FOREX.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Medical Tourism is an old concept dating back to ancient Greece, when Greek pilgrims travelled from all over the Mediterranean to the small territory in the Saronic Gulf called Epiduoria. Eiduoria became the original travel destination for medical tourism. Medical Tourism can be defined as the process of travelling outside the country of residence for the purpose of receiving medical care. Medical Tourism is broadly defined as cost effective private medical care in collaboration with the tourism industry for overseas patients needing specialised treatment. Originally, the term referred to the travel of patients from less developed countries to developed nations in pursuit of the treatment not

available in their homeland. According to World Health Organization (WHO), Medical Tourism is defined as tourism associated with travel to health Spas or resort destinations, where the primary purpose is to improve traveller's physical well-being through a process comprising physical exercises and therapy, dietary control, and medical services relevant to health maintenance. As a result of globalization, increased number of people is travelling to other countries to get quality treatment at affordable prices. Health care attention i.e. both surgical and non-surgical procedures are another important factor for Medical Tourism. In developed countries, the cost of treatment is very high, further the patients have to wait for a very long time to get treatment or surgery. This has prompted people to look at other effective options. Among these options is looking for treatment in other countries having good treatment facilities at a very reasonable cost. Growth in the popularity of Medical Tourism has captured the attention of policy makers, researchers and the media. Today we are experiencing both qualitative and quantitative shifts in patient mobility, as people travel from richer to less developed countries in order to access health services. The primary reason that clinics and hospitals in the developing countries are able to lower their prices is directly related to the nation's economic status. We can see that the cost of surgeries in these countries is 30% to 70% lower when compared to U.S.

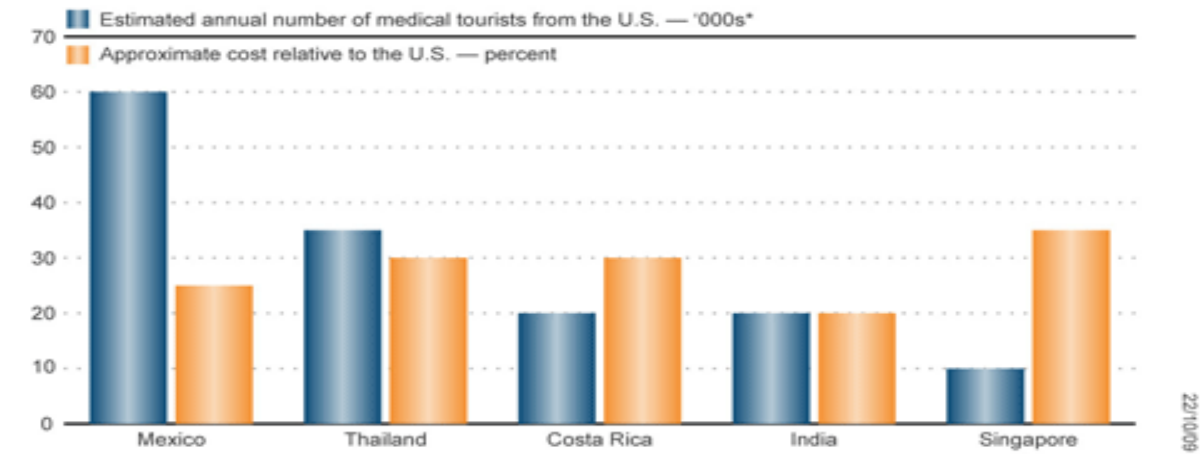


## **MEDICAL TOURISM IN INDIA:**

India is an international medical travel destination for patients seeking world class treatment at competitive rates. India is the favourable destination for Medical Tourism in the world. Majority of the patients coming to India for treatment are from the Middle East, Africa, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Maldives, Pakistan, Bhutan and Sri Lanka. India's cost advantage has significantly opened the doors to the US and Europe over future, due to lower cost than the US and almost half that of Europe. In India the history of treatment goes back to Vedic period. Vedas describes various remedies of many diseases. India has become Medical Tourism capital of modern world. Recently in October 2017, the third edition of "Advantage Healthcare India" 2017 summit was held in Bengaluru (Karnataka) by FICCI. In this summit, Rita Teotia secretary, ministry of commerce Govt. of India said that Medical Tourism in india can grow to become a \$9 billion by 2020 as compared to \$3 billion in 2015. According to latest FICCI report, over 500,000 foreign patients seek treatment in India every year. Similarly in December 2017, minister for Tourism Govt. of India M.R K.J. Alphons states in Lok Sabha that India is among the top six medical value travel destination of the world which also include Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan and Mexico, because of low priced health care procedures. The high-end healthcare system in India is as good as the best in the world. India maintains not only a robust accreditation system but also a large number of accredited facilities (about 275 such facilities that match any global infrastructure). India has a good number (22) of JCI (Joint Commission International) accredited hospitals and compares well with other countries in Asia. These set of approved hospitals in India can provide care at par or above global standards.

## Medical tourism by country

Five of the countries visited most often for medical treatment



Reuters graphic/Stephen Culp

REUTERS

Cutting edge technology to support medical diagnostics and medical procedures are employed by specialists in medical facilities. All recognized hospitals have invested a lot in supportive technology and operative techniques. Complicated heart surgeries, cancer care and surgeries, neuro and even general surgeries require high-end technology to continually better outcomes, minimize complications, enable faster recovery and reduce length of hospital stay. The recent advancements in robotic surgeries, radiation surgery or radio therapies with cyber knife stereotactic options, IMRT / IGRT, transplant support systems, advanced neuro and spinal options are all available in India. India's medical management and acclaimed specialists are quite comfortable in challenging themselves to new frontiers to provide solutions, always building on their expertise.

India has not only hospitals with world-class facilities but skilled world-class doctors and medical personnel too. The country has the largest pool of doctors and paramedics in South Asia (1.2 million Allopathic doctors. 0.17 million dental surgeons, 2 million nurses). Many of them have established their credentials as leaders around the world. India's medical history spans thousands of years through Ayurvedic and alternate medicine forms. There are about 0.8 million formally trained Ayurvedic doctors. With a large number of doctors, there is a high level of competency and capability in adoption of newer technologies and innovation and fresh treatment methods. It is a wonderful example of higher quantity leading to higher quality and vice versa. The concept of Medical Tourism in India refers to visit by overseas patients for

medical treatment and relaxation. The opportunities in India healthcare sector, in medical infrastructure and technology is as good as those offered in the western countries. India ranks among top three medical tourist destinations in Asia.

<b>Average Cost of Medical Procedures</b>					
Medical Procedure	USA	Costa Rica	India	Mexico	Vietnam
Heart Bypass	\$144,000	\$25,000	\$5,200	\$27,000	N/A
Angioplasty	\$57,000	\$13,000	\$3,300	\$12,500	N/A
Heart Valve Replacement	\$170,000	\$30,000	\$5,500	\$18,000	N/A
Hip Replacement	\$50,000	\$12,500	\$7,000	\$13,000	\$8,250
Hip Resurfacing	\$50,000	\$12,500	\$7,000	\$15,000	N/A
Knee Replacement	\$50,000	\$11,500	\$6,200	\$12,000	\$8,500
Spinal Fusion	\$100,000	\$11,500	\$6,500	\$12,000	\$6,150
Dental Implant	\$2,800	\$900	\$1,000	\$1,800	N/A
Lap Band	\$30,000	\$8,500	\$3,000	\$6,500	N/A
Breast Implants	\$10,000	\$3,800	\$3,500	\$3,500	\$3,850
Rhinoplasty	\$8,000	\$4,500	\$4,000	\$3,500	\$2,100
Face Lift	\$15,000	\$6,000	\$4,000	\$4,900	\$4,150
Hysterectomy	\$15,000	\$5,700	\$2,500	\$5,800	N/A
Gastric Sleeve	\$28,700	\$10,500	\$5,000	\$9,995	N/A
Gastric Bypass	\$32,972	\$12,500	\$5,000	\$10,950	N/A
Liposuction	\$9,000	\$3,900	\$2,800	\$2,800	\$2,850
Tummy Tuck	\$9,750	\$5,300	\$3,000	\$4,025	\$3,850
Lasik (both eyes)	\$4,400	\$1,800	\$500	\$1,995	\$1,640
Source: Medical Tourism Association					

Medical visa in India is issued to those foreign nationals who want to visit India solely for treatment of serious ailments in recognized hospitals/medical centers. Neuro surgery, ophthalmic disorders, congenital disorders, organ transplantation, renal disorders, cardiac problems, plastic surgery, radio-therapy, joint replacement etc. would come under serious ailments. However, the list is not exhaustive. The patients need to produce a medical certificate from recognized hospitals or medical centre in India, indicating the dates, place and duration of treatment. The initial period of visa will be up to one year

or the duration of treatment, whichever is earlier. The visa will be valid for up to three visits during one year.

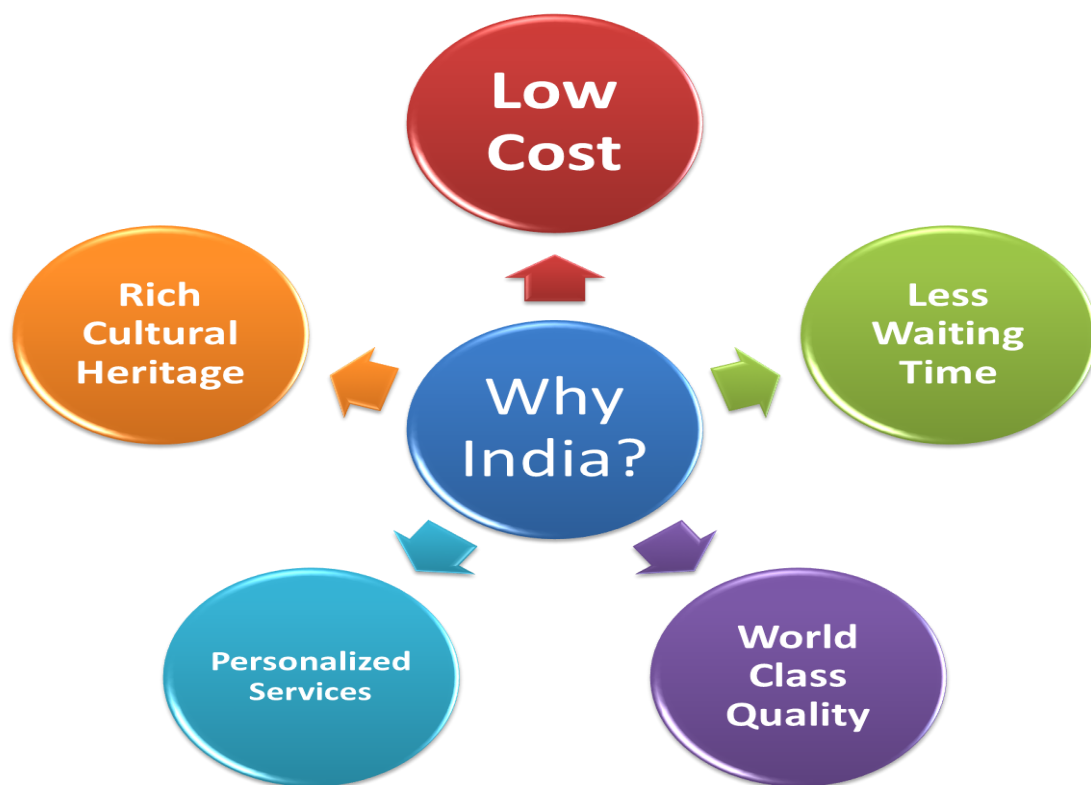
Medical attendant visa is for attendant or family members of the patient coming for treatment. Maximum two attendants are permitted. The duration of visa is co-terminus with the visa of the patient. A certificate from recognized hospitals/medicals in India to the effect that assistance of one/two attendants is needed should be produced. The names of the attendants should be mentioned in the letter. The environment for most of the complicated surgeries is suitable in India. In India we have Appolo group of hospitals and research centres, Fortis hospitals, Tata memorial hospital and escorts group of hospitals and research centres, who cater these patients. A complete transplant or bypass procedures can be achieved for a tiny fraction of the cost for the same procedure in U.S. This lower cost includes significantly longer post-operative care in the hospital itself.

The American Medical Association has made a cost comparison study of healthcare in different countries. According to the statistics released by AMA, a knee replacement surgery would cost \$40,000 in US, \$10,000 in Thailand and \$13,000 in Singapore, while the same surgery would cost the person \$8500 in India. That gives India a certain edge when it comes to reasonable medical treatments. In addition, Indian doctors are renowned all over the world for their prowess and skills.

A heart valve replacement surgery would cost the patients \$200,000 in the US and \$90,000 in Britain while it would cost \$12,500 in Singapore and \$10,000 in Thailand. The same procedure in India would cost only \$8,000. While a bone marrow transplant would cost \$30,000 in India, in US it would cost anywhere between \$250,000-\$400,000 while in UK the cost would be of the order of \$150,000. Doctors in Thailand would charge \$3,500 for cosmetic surgery while those in US and UK would charge \$20,000 and \$10,000, respectively.



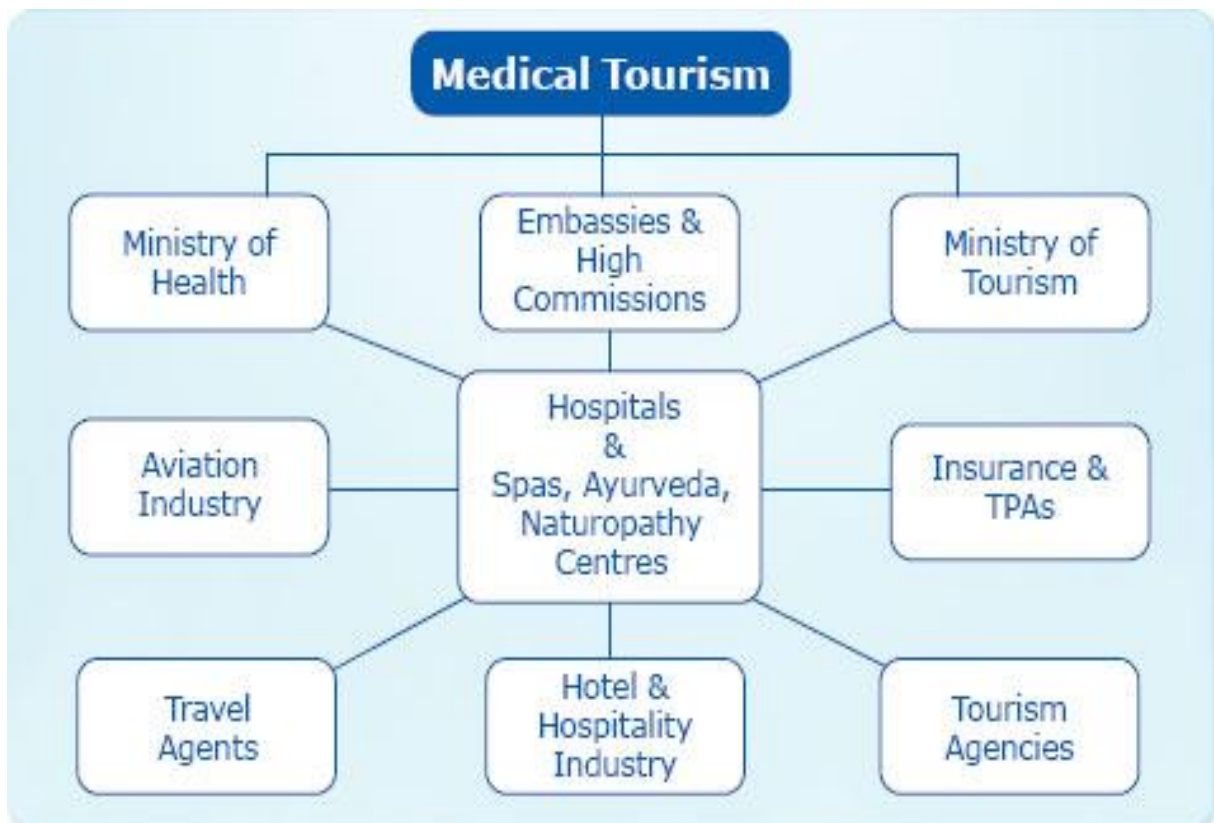
But in India, it costs only \$2000. No matter what procedure you undergo, you are sure to save 75% to 95% of healthcare costs. Besides, India is a great place to explore with rich heritage, architecture and culture. So you can always combine your treatment with a holiday. Although costs in European countries such as Germany and Belgium may be less than that in the United States, but Europe is still more expensive than India. In fact, the data of AMA shows that India is the least expensive when compared to European as well as other Asian countries. Apart from the cost benefit, you will have the same sophistication in healthcare in India as available in any western country. Tour operators like Indian Holiday provide medical tourism packages at competitive prices and offer you a hassle free recovery from your ailments and a great holiday too.



**COMPARATIVE COST OF TREATMENT CHART IN U.S AND INDIA (IN U.S \$ APPROX.)**

<b><u>PROCEDURES</u></b>	<b><u>U.S.A</u></b>	<b><u>INDIA</u></b>
HEART BYPASS	133,000	7000
HEART VALVE REPLACEMENT WITH BYPASS	140,000	9500
HIP REPLACEMENT	57000	7020
KNEE REPLACEMENT	53000	9200
FACE LIFT	16000	4800
LAP. GASTRIC BYPASS	52000	9300

Besides allopathic treatment procedures, India is offering Ayurveda, yoga, and homeopathic treatments also. There are many states in India which are very famous for these type of treatments like Kerala, Uttarakhand, Goa, Udaipur etc. According to RNCOS market report, India is favourable medical destination in the world.





In total in 2015-2016 Indian hospitals had 460,000 international patients - while medical visa figures were less than half of that. It is hard to be precise, as medical visa figures tend to be by calendar year compared to the financial year figures that the report uses.

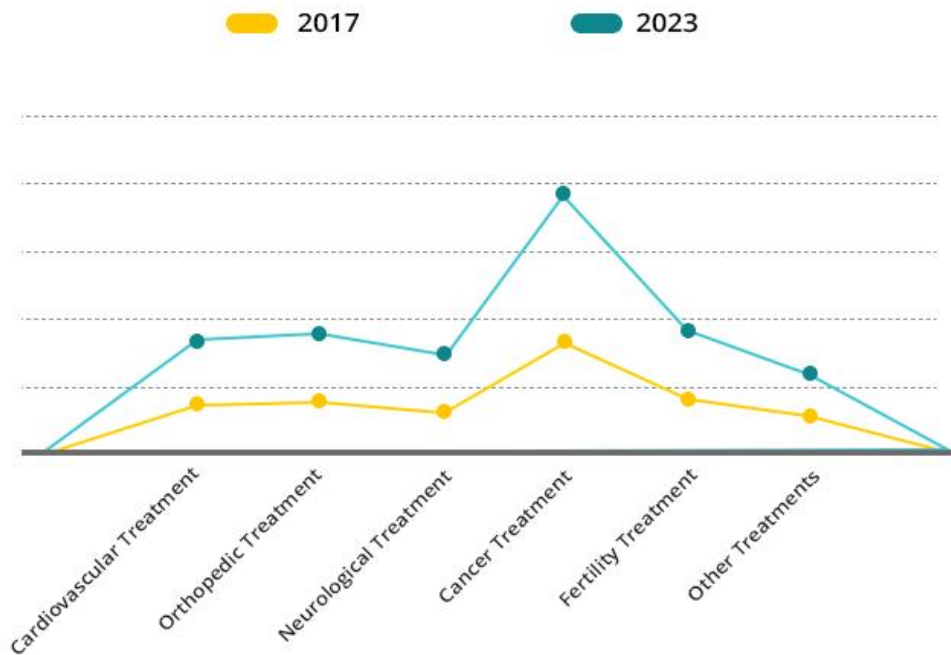
While one in three foreign patients in Indian hospitals were from Bangladesh, at 165,000 - only 58,300 of these were true medical tourists on a medical visa.

Other top nations for medical visas

- Afghanistan: 29,492
- Iraq: 9,131
- Nigeria: 5,994
- Kenya: 3,240
- Pakistan: 1,921

The highest average earnings per patient for foreigners in India are from Pakistan at \$2,906. Pakistan is followed by Bangladesh (\$2,084), CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) countries (\$1,950), Russia (\$1,618) and Iraq (\$1,530), according to a first of its kind survey on export of health services by Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics, part of the commerce ministry.

## GLOBAL MEDICAL TOURISM MARKET BY TREATMENT TYPE



**Neurological treatment** segment is projected as one of the most lucrative segments.

With the developed countries finding themselves overburdened with the task of providing cost-effective healthcare, India has emerged as a popular global Medical Tourism destination. Medical institutions in India are providing for an estimated 20,000 to 30,000 doctors and nurses each year, complemented with medical facilities driven by advanced technology and high-quality procedures at par with hospitals in developed nations and at a price that could be a fraction of what one would spend in their country. Keeping in view the growing pace of Medical Tourism in India, many travel agencies are coming up with medical packages for foreign patients, e.g. heart surgery, cosmetic surgery, oncology, nephrology etc. There are so many factors which make India a hub and favourable destination for Medical Tourism:

1. India has a very fast-growing economy and it has led to privatization in the field of healthcare. India allows 100% FDI (foreign direct investment) in the health sector. This results in the setting up of the world-class hospitals with latest technologies and world-renowned doctors at par with developed countries.

2. Due to advancement in software industry in India, it has also brought tremendous revolution in health care sector.
3. In India, there are world class pharmaceutical companies that provide the world class drugs at a very reasonable price as compared to developed nations.
4. India has excellent academic and research institutions. These institutions produce world class physicians, surgeons and nurses.
5. India offers state of the art and cutting edge technology, and highly advanced treatment at a very less cost as compared to developed countries.
6. Indian consulate's and embassies in different countries provide hassle free medical visas on priority basis, which also booms Medical Tourism in India. India is now also providing services of e-visa's and visa on arrival.
7. Most of the developed countries are getting good values for their currencies in India, i.e. they are getting good exchange rates in India.
8. India has a very high qualified English speaking manpower, which also gives it edge over this industry.
9. India has good connectivity with rest of the world. It has 24 international airports and 13 major ports.
10. India has a well-developed accommodation sector with a good number of international chain of hotels.
11. Presence of good network of world class hospitals.
12. Most of the doctors and surgeons at Indian hospitals are trained or have worked at some of the medical institutions in the US, Europe, or other developed nations.
13. Top of the line medical and diagnostic equipment from global international conglomerates is available at many Indian hospitals.
14. Government and private sector investment in healthcare infrastructure.
15. Demonstrable commitment to international accreditation, quality assurance, and transparency of outcomes.
16. International patient flow.

17. Political transparency and social stability.
18. Excellent tourism infrastructure.
19. Sustained reputation for clinical excellence.
20. History of healthcare innovation and achievement.

Taking all this into account, India is turning out to be among one of the favourite health treatment destination at a fractional costs with minimal waiting period.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Medical Tourism is becoming one of the fastest growing industries in the world, with approximately a growth of 30% a year. "Medical Tourism Industry Valued at \$439 billion" in the world. Medical Tourism industry offers high potential for India primarily because of low cost of treatment with high quality. Medical Tourism will help in maintaining good relation with other countries and will help in exchange of manpower and technology among countries. Millions of people come every year to India and get satisfied with world class treatment done with the peace of mind.

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