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Strengthening ecosystem for medical tourism in India

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Government has implemented several policies to facilitate medical tourism, including the introduction of medical visas



India's prominence in the global medical tourism industry is underpinned by a blend of cost-effective treatments, advanced medical technology, and a highly skilled healthcare workforce. The country has rapidly become a sought-after destination for international patients seeking high-quality healthcare services at a fraction of the cost compared to developed nations.

This strategic advantage is reflected in the comprehensive medical care and cutting-edge technological solutions offered by Indian healthcare providers. With the industry poised for significant growth, reports suggest that over 7.3 million medical tourists will visit India in 2024, surpassing pre-pandemic levels. The appeal of India as a medical tourism hub is further enhanced by the initiatives and programmes launched by major healthcare organisations and startups, aimed at attracting international patients and advancing the country’s medical tourism infrastructure.

Apollo Hospitals, one of India’s most recognised healthcare providers, has been at the forefront of medical tourism with its "Apollo International Patient Services" programme. This initiative is designed to provide seamless and comprehensive care for international patients. Additionally, Apollo Hospitals has established telemedicine centres in various countries, allowing potential patients to consult with specialists in India before making travel decisions.

Fortis Healthcare, another major player in India’s medical tourism sector, has developed a robust "International Patient Services" programme aimed at catering to the unique needs of medical tourists. Fortis has set up specialised centres of excellence in fields such as cardiology, orthopedics, oncology, and neurosurgery, which are equipped with state-of-the-art technology and staffed by internationally trained doctors. The hospital chain’s commitment to quality care and patient-centric services has made it a preferred destination for patients from across the globe, particularly from the Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia.

Further, Max Healthcare, a leading healthcare provider in India, has developed several innovative programmes aimed at enhancing the experience of international patients. For instance, the "Max@Home" service is particularly noteworthy, offering post-treatment care and recovery services in the comfort of the patient's own accommodation, be it a hotel or a serviced apartment.

Adding on, Medanta - The Medicity, a renowned multi-specialty medical institute in India, has established its "One-Stop International Patient Care" programme, which is specifically designed to cater to the needs of international patients. This programme provides a single point of contact for all patient needs, from pre-arrival consultation and travel planning to post-treatment follow-ups.

The impact of these programmes on India's economy is substantial. Medical tourism not only contributes significantly to the country’s GDP but also drives the expansion of healthcare infrastructure and the adoption of new technologies. As revenue from international patients continues to grow, it supports the development of state-of-the-art medical facilities and stimulates growth in ancillary industries such as hospitality, transportation, and retail. The influx of medical tourists also leads to job creation within the healthcare sector and related industries, further bolstering economic activity nationwide.

The growth of India’s medical tourism sector is further bolstered by government initiatives and public-private partnerships aimed at enhancing the industry’s infrastructure and regulatory framework.

The Indian government has implemented several policies to facilitate medical tourism, including the introduction of medical visas and the development of medical tourism promotion boards. With an aim to improve medical tourism in the country, the Ministry of Tourism formulated a National Strategy and Roadmap for Medical and Wellness Tourism in 2022.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has also launched India’s official portal for Medical Value Travel (MVT) for those who want to avail medical treatment in India. This portal helps streamline the information and patient journey of international medical travellers to India.

These efforts are complemented by private sector initiatives, where healthcare providers and startups collaborate to innovate and streamline services for international patients.

By addressing challenges related to regulatory compliance, infrastructure scalability, and service quality, these partnerships are key to sustaining India’s leadership in the global medical tourism market.

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