CHAPTER 4
MEDICAL TOURISM IN KERALA

4.1: Introduction

Tourism is the temporary movement of the people from their residence and work place to other places for their recreation and pleasure. Medical tourism includes a component of medical and health care services along with its counterpart tourism. Medical tourism is defined as any kind of travel to make a person or a member of his family healthier. The word Medical tourism was coined when people started looking outside west for cheaper medical treatment with international quality. It can be broadly defined as a provision of 'cost effective' private medical care in collaboration with the tourism industry for patients needing surgical care and other forms. Medical tourism is also called health tourism, healing tourism and wellness tourism. Medical value travel, treatment beyond boundaries is other synonyms of medical tourism. Health tourism is a concept as ancient as prehistory and as up-to- date as tomorrow. Medical value travel has experienced a steady growth, especially in Asian regions where countries including, India, Thailand and Singapore are considered among the most-preferred destinations.

![Medical tourism diagram]

Fig. 4.1: Components of Medical tourism
Medical tourism includes the combined efforts of a number of components like ministry of health, ministry of tourism, embassies and high commissioners of various countries, aviation industry, hospitals, ayurveda, naturopathy and spa centers, insurance sector, travel agents, tourism agencies, hospitals and hospitality industry etc; as represented in the following diagram.

India is an attractive and favorable destination for medical tourism as people from all over the world visit India for their medical and relaxation needs. India has some of the best hospitals with world class facilities, infrastructure and technologies in it which is in par with those in USA, UK and Europe. The quality of service coupled with comparatively low charges for common surgeries has made India an excellent destination for health tourism. Patients from neighboring countries, Middle East and NRIs settled in the US and UK are the main clientele of Indian medical tourism. The alternative system of medicine, especially Ayurveda in Kerala is a major attraction for the foreign tourists. With yoga, meditation, ayurveda, allopathy and natural herbal treatments, India offers a unique basket of services to foreign patient-tourists that are difficult to match by other countries. Medical tourism is a growing sector in India. India’s medical tourism sector is expected to experience an annual growth rate of 30%, making it a Rs. 9,500-crore industry by 2015.

Kerala is a southern state of India known by the tag line “Gods own country” in the tourism map. Kerala is listed among the “top 10 paradises in the world” and among “50 must-see destinations of a lifetime” by National Geographic’s Traveler magazine. Most visitors to Kerala define the state by its exotic location, favorable climate, and educated and cultured population. While a regional language prevails in most airports at Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi and Kozhikode allow visitors to fly to any part of Kerala in less than three hours. Kerala tops the indices for India’s lowest infant mortality and highest life expectancy rates. With a 100 percent literacy rate, Kerala has the highest Physical Quality of Life Index in India and is the only Indian state with macro health indicators on par with OECD countries. For medical value travel, flight connectivity across countries forms an essential factor. Kerala enjoys a
strategic placement on the Indian map offering seamless connectivity through the Middle East and Far East. Kerala has pioneered and concentrated on efforts to provide quality medical facilities and low-cost treatments for Indian as well as international patients. The establishment of top multi-specialty hospitals and emergence of skilled and qualified doctors are facilitating Kerala’s job growth. The majority of hospitals, both public and private, have achieved National Accreditation Board for Hospital and Healthcare Provider and International Society for Quality in Healthcare (ISQH) designations. Kerala has delivered world-class standards of healthcare at affordable costs – about a 15 percent discount – compared to other destinations in India.

Kerala has gained international attention for health tourism and is becoming a popular health tourism hub. Kerala and Ayurveda have virtually become synonymous with each other. World-class facilities are also available in the other traditional forms of medicine as well as modern medical treatment. There are a number of specialty hospitals in Kerala that offer specialized care for complex medical conditions. The quality of health care offered by the doctors, nurses and support staff, make medical tourism in Kerala the preferred choice of patients. Health Tourism can add much value, both in quality and monetary wise to Kerala Tourism and many entrepreneurs are realized this and made millions worth investments towards this front. To promote Kerala’s health-care entrepreneurs and medical tourism leaders, Future Medicine in association with Department of Tourism - Government of Kerala, Ernst & Young and Travel & Flavors magazine organized the medical value tourism conclave 2015 on 24th January 2015. The event served as a rare networking circle where India's medical tourism leaders, top class professionals and innovative organizations to chart their future course of action.

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has declared 2006-2007 as Medical Tourism Year in Kerala and they organized an International conference and exhibition on Health tourism in 2013 at Kochi, Kerala. According to the CII-Mc Kinsy report medical tourism industry in Kerala is expected to be worth $4 billion by 2017.

The demand for medical treatment and surgery in Kerala is increasing especially in the gulf and Europe. The NRIs, who prefer treatment in their home
country, are playing a significant role in this regard. Several MNCs offer medical treatment options to employees and families at cost effective rates. What with soaring health care costs and long waits for medical procedures in the West, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find quality, affordable treatment there. India and especially Kerala is emerging as a major medical tourism destination.

4.2: Cost of Treatments

Kerala is an obvious choice for those who travel the globe for quality health treatments at reasonable costs. With expertise and technology at par with their European and American counterparts, the health care providers in Kerala also offer the additional advantage of reduced costs. In Kerala, the cost for many of the healthcare treatments is lower by at least 75-95% when compared to similar procedures in Middle-East, USA and UK. Add to it, the waiting time which is almost nil in case of Kerala. Significant cost differences exist between rest of the world and India when it comes to medical treatment. India is not only a cheaper option, but the waiting time is nonexistent. The development of private sector hospitals and clinics with the latest technology, skilled practitioners has given the Indian medical tourism industry the edge. Cost comparison for a few common procedures among various destinations in the world is as below.

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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>Thailand</th>
<th>Singapore</th>
<th>India</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heart Bypass</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
<td>$130,000</td>
<td>$11,000</td>
<td>$18,500</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heart Surgery</td>
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<td>Angioplasty</td>
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<td>Hip Replacement</td>
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<td>$12,000</td>
<td>$9,000</td>
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<td>Knee Replacement</td>
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<td>$10,000</td>
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<td>Spinal Fusion</td>
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<td>$60,000</td>
<td>$7,000</td>
<td>$9,000</td>
<td>$5,500</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1; Cost comparison table; Source: American Medical Association

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROCEDURE</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>SINGAPORE</th>
<th>UAE</th>
<th>INDIA</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>17,000</td>
<td>40,900</td>
<td>7,000</td>
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<td>Heart valve replacement with bypass</td>
<td>145,000</td>
<td>23,000</td>
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<tr>
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<td>12,000</td>
<td>46,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knee Replacement</td>
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<td>10,000</td>
<td>40,200</td>
<td>9,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Face Lift</td>
<td>20,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lap. Gastric Bypass</td>
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<td>16,500</td>
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</table>

Table 4.2; *all prices are in USD (Source tours2health.com)

The cost saving are as high as 70 % to 80 % and when compared to some places there is almost 90% cost savings for certain procedures. The cost benefits are really pulling more and more people to India for treatment.
4.3: **Dental Tourism Clinics in Kerala**

4.3.1: **Nechupadam Dental Clinic, Kochi**

Established in 17th August, 1965 by chairman Dr. K. T. Paulose, Nechupadam Dental Clinic is the first internationally certified (ISO 9001; 2000) dental clinic in the state of Kerala. With over 50 years of service and a solid foundation based on excellence and efficiency in the dental field. Their Kolenchery clinic also functions as a charitable dental clinic every Friday. Patient friendly Cochin city clinic, equipped with all modern amenities is their only branch and operates from Marine Drive.

Kolenchery Clinic of Nechupadam Dental functions from self-owned building in a serene village in Kolenchery town. It is well connected by road, rail and air. Distance from the city of Cochin is 20 miles and a mere 28miles from Cochin International Airport. Thripunithura and Aluva railway stations are at a short distance of 18Kms each. The clinic is located 200mts away from NH49 Cochin – Madhura Highway.

Nechupadam dental clinic is primarily a family concern. Dr. K. T. Paulose and his sons Dr. Thomas K. Paulose and Dr. Varghese K. Paulose have dedicated their lives to the common vision of providing quality dental care for all.

Nechupadam Dental Clinic Cochin Kerala presents the fastest and the best technology for smile designing and correction of dental irregularities such as forwardly or irregularly placed teeth for adults. Any of the teeth that may need root canal therapy (RCT) could be treated in just one day with no pain during or after the treatment since the treatment is done using the latest protaper rotary instruments (XSmartTM Dentsply). Any teeth that are missing could be replaced by a technology called as Cercon CAD CAM Milling permanent fixed prosthesis from Sirona technologies in just 4 days. The treatment is protected by company warranty for ten years against any change in the structure and does not require any surgery or extractions or braces or any hospitalization during or after the treatment.
4.3.2: Dr. Cherian’s Cosmetic and Specialists Dental Clinic, Kochi

Dr. Cherian’s Cosmetic and Specialists Dental Clinic is well known throughout Kerala and many parts of the world for providing the best quality dentistry, customer care and PAINLESS treatments. Proud to be one of Kerala's and India's leading Cosmetic Dental clinic and change people’s lives by transforming their smiles, offering the latest technology in a relaxed and enjoyable environment and achieve the best result for a healthy, beautiful and long lasting bright, smile. Dr. Cherian’s Cosmetic and Specialists Dental Clinic has been featured on many magazines, news papers and TV shows. They are dedicated to exceeding expectations in cosmetic dental treatments. At their Dental Practice the Cosmetic Dentists have the highest levels of training and experience. They take referrals from many dentists for complicated and advanced dentistry.

4.3.3: Midac-The Centre For Excellence in Dentistry, Calicut, Kochi, Malappuram

MIDAC - the world class centre for dentistry, implants and cosmetic dentistry in Kerala. Everyone at MIDAC is dedicated to the well-being of patients. They provide with the best treatment options available, all administered by their highly trained doctors and staffs. The doctors who listens to the unique concerns and responds to the needs, giving patients painless, quick, and easy treatment. Whether looking for cosmetic dentistry or treatment for any dental condition, their staff works hard to make sure that the patients are comfortable and healthy.

MIDAC is a benchmark initiative in dentistry by ANPC with over 18 years experience in Hospital Service at Middle East. MIDAC, holds the entire office up to a rigorous standard of quality. They use State of the Art Equipment and Techniques, bringing new, advanced options to thier patients. When a tourist schedule an appointment, MIDAC makes sure that his concerns get the attention he deserves from their professional and courteous staff. From the comfortable waiting room to the calm atmosphere, the dental staffs will ensure that his visit is pleasant and productive. An in-house dental para pharmacy supplies any products prescribed by the dentists and
stocks dental supplies such as mouthwashes, toothbrushes and toothpastes for patient’s convenience. MIDAC attains a level of service that strives toward 100% patient satisfaction from making appointment to leaving the clinic.

4.3.4: Vijaya dental care, calicut

Vijaya Dental provides international quality dental care clubbed with tourism in God’s own country Kerala. The rising costs of dental treatments and the long waiting times make treatment in other countries a difficult task. But in Kerala, the treatment costs and waiting time is cut short and medical expertise and facilities which are up to international standards is also available. Lush greenery and enchanting backwaters makes Kerala, a destination chosen by many to revive the mind, body and spirit. In the serene beauty of the land, the curative power of Ayurveda, traditional folk arts and a lot of sight seeing you will discover an exotic experience memorable through a life time. Vijaya Dental Care is one of the few clinics in India catering to international dental tourists concentrating on providing dental treatment clubbing it with a dental tourism perspective as well. Being located in the historic town of Calicut (Kozhikode) and in the close vicinity of picturesque Wayanad, our patients have the advantage of going to many scenic locations during their treatments. We can arrange for accommodation, special tour packages interspersed with dental treatment so that you can save time and go visit your favorite destinations in between treatments.

4.3.5: Chakkalakkal Dental Clinic & Implant Center, Kochi

Dr. Loji’s CHAKKALAKKAL Dental Clinic & Implant Center was established in Airport city, Nedumbassery in 1996. In this long run our team of doctors was able to provide the best kind of treatment and facilities to our patients and to the society as a whole. Dr. LOJI .C.G graduated from Dr. MGR MEDICAL UNIVERSITY of Tamilnadu in 1995. He was renowned as an outstanding dental surgeon and a true academic, who believes in sharing knowledge to all. He started his clinical practice in airport city, Nedumbassery Ernakulam and has 16 years of experience in all specialties of dentistry.
4.3.6: Trivandrum Dental Specialists Group - The Best Dental Clinic in Trivandrum

Trivandrum Dental Specialists Group was started by Dr S Sujathen with the aim of providing patients in Trivandrum with a superior quality dental experience. His extraordinary commitment to high levels of quality and service has made the Trivandrum Dental Specialists Group, the leading dental clinic in Trivandrum. Dr. Sujathen is recognized as one of the leading Endodontists in Kerala, as well as a highly sought after expert in Crown, Bridge and Implant Dentistry in India.

4.4: Spa Tourism in Kerala

The term ‘Spa’ is an acronym derived from the Latin phrase, Salus per Aquam which means health by water, in ancient time people used to travel to hot or cold springs in hope of effecting cure for some illness. Even in modern times the therapeutic property of water is being used to treat various health disorders. The international Spa Association has defined Spa as” places devoted to overall well-being through a variety of professional services that rejuvenates mind, body and spirit” Pamper your body, Nurture your mind and Rejuvenate your spirit. The trend of combining the benefits of a spa visit with a holiday has increased. Awareness regarding the benefits of Healthy eating, nutrition, exercise, beauty, relaxation and pampering is increasing and people love to include those elements in their holidays or purposefully travel to achieve wellness. Either it is visiting local spa or traveling overseas, more and more people are opting to take break from their speedy life to pamper themselves, relax and rejuvenates. Now a day’s number of Spas and retreat associations are actively promoting and working extensively on the further development of the wellness industry by coming out with specialized spa including eco-friendly spas, luxury spas, romantic spas, pampering spas, stress management etc. In addition to this, to attract more people and satisfy their demands different spas are promoting variety of wellness programmes and treatments including healthy lifestyles, alternative therapies, fitness programs, weight-loss treatments, Detox diets, mineral and thermal skin treatments, massage and yoga.
A **spa** is a location where mineral-rich spring water is used to give medicinal baths. In Kerala spa treatments are marketed along with ayurveda tourism. Most of the ayurvedic tourism centers are providing a separate spa centre near to it. Medicinal bath in spa is also called Baleno therapy. Today's environment creates excessive amounts of pollutants. As a result, individuals accumulate large amount of toxins in their bodies. If left in the tissues and bloodstream, these toxins begin to generate diseases in the human body. This increasing trend of diseases has led to the popularity of Spa tours in India as one of the best theme travel tours in India. The Spa tours in India help you eliminate these toxins through a combination of massage, herbal saunas, special food and dietary patterns, mild fasting and colon therapy. The special massage at the Spa Tour tends to eject the toxins out of your tissues. During the special massage, certain points of energy blockages, known as Marma points (similar to acupressure points) are cleared up.

**4.5: Ayush in Kerala**

AYUSH is an acronym of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy. Govt. of Kerala, with an aim to give a boost to traditional systems of medicines and incorporate them in the prevention and treatment of diseases, launched its AYUSH department on 5th August, 2015. The proposed department, designed on the model of the Centre's AYUSH department, is envisaged to focus on treatment, research and education in Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy.

**4.6: Jobs and Careers in Medical Tourism**

Medical Tourism is an open area where job opportunities are available in the fields of health care as well as tourism sectors. Besides doctors, nurses and physician assistants, there are employment opportunities available in the field of medical tourism in various positions such as guest relationship managers; hospital administrators; medical tour consultants etc. Candidates with relevant qualifications in the fields of medical tourism and hospital administration are preferred by most of the employers.
A career in medical tourism involves providing facilities for a client to travel, financing options for visas, arranging the hospital, boarding, lodging, best treatment, and tourism after treatment. Spa and wellness industry; Hospitality and Hotel Industry; health and allied services; Clinics, Health Spas; Ayurveda and Naturopathy Centers; Travel Agents; Tourism Agencies; Aviation Industry; Insurance companies etc. are some of the career options for the medical tourism professionals.

Today Kerala hospitals and pharmaceutical companies are investing heavily in infrastructure and other required facilities for attracting foreign tourists. Hospitals that offer treatment for foreign patients tie up with travel agencies or can employ individuals who have graduated in travel and tourism management. Travel and Tourism related courses like MBA Health Management, MBA Travel and Tourism Management, M.Sc. Health Care and Hospital Administration etc. will help an individual to opt a career in medical tourism field.

In Kerala, a new career developed, especially for women that are medical interpreters, who assist patients in communication with doctors and health care attendants. Medical interpretation is not easy as the translation of speech, as they have to express the emotions of patients to doctors, and they are called “interpreters of maladies”. The women patients from Arab countries with limited English Proficiency were reluctant to reveal their details to male interpreters and prefer women candidates.

4.7: Journals on Medical Tourism

Articles on medical tourism in Kerala are publishing in a number of journals of various disciplines, especially in Commerce, Management and Marketing. In this study fifty journals, which contain articles on medical tourism are listed through web search to reveal the scattered nature of scholarly information on various disciplines due to the multidisciplinary nature of tourism and thereby establishing the relevance of web resources on medical tourism in Kerala.
Conclusion

Advanced technology and world class infrastructure make Kerala a perfect Medical Tourism destination. Medication combines with Tourism make it a most exotic destination. Apart from the high standard of medical care and affordability, waiting time is much lower for any treatment in Kerala as compared to other countries.

References

