Chapter 5

Government Policies for Medical Tourism Development

5.1 Policies, Schemes and Initiatives by Tourism Ministry

5.1.1 Government Initiatives in Medical Tourism

5.1.2 Medical VISA

5.1.3 MDA Scheme (Marketing & Development Assistance)

5.1.4 Wellness Tourism Promotion Scheme

5.1.5 Indian states Initiatives
Chapter 5  Government Policies for Medical Tourism Development

5.1  Policies, Schemes and Initiatives by Tourism Ministry

Over 40 governments across the globe are involved in supporting medical tourism and the number is growing each year. Ministries of Tourism, Ministries of Health, Secretaries of Economic Development and other branches are all working together on medical tourism initiatives to promote their city, region or country as a destination for medical tourism (MTA 2010). There is no special policy on Medial Tourism by Government of India but through extensive literature reviews it was found that in other policies there are references of medical tourism. The Medical Tourism activity is mainly driven by the private sector. The Ministry of Tourism only plays the role of a facilitator in terms of marketing and promoting in the key markets. The steps taken by Ministry of Tourism to promote India as a Medical and Health Tourism Destination includes promotion at international platforms such as World Travel Mart London, ITB Berlin, ATM, etc. Yoga/Ayurveda/Wellness has been promoted in the past years in the print, electronic, internet and outdoor media under the Ministry of Tourism's "Incredible India Campaign"\(^1\).

Ministry of Tourism Govt. of India have started some schemes for the promotion and development of medical tourism like MVISA, MXVISA, MDA Schemes and Wellness Tourism promotion schemes.

5.1.1  Government Initiatives in Medical Tourism

Ministry of Tourism has published promotional material brouchers on medical tourism and VCD and information has been put on website. The title of this broucher is ‘Incredible India, Global Healthcare Destination’. Detailed information has been given in the brouchers which is very attractive and informative where medical tourist will get information about the healthcare service providers in India, specialty, super specialty services available in India. It also include information about Cardiology, Orthopedics, Oncology, Minimally invasive surgery, Cosmetology, Rejuvenate, wellness and patient testimonials. VCD is more attractive and audio-visual promoting specially

\(^1\) Ministry O F Tourism, “ANNUAL REPORT 2011-12”, 2011.
Ayurveda and Wellness product holistic medicinal services with yoga, meditation, Ayurveda, allopathic and other system of medicines. It offers a unique basket of services to an individual that is difficult to match with other countries. The brochure by Ministry of tourism government of India provides a directory with full address and contact numbers of providers so that the medical tourist can contact them. Copies of these brochures are widely available at all Indian and overseas offices of India Tourism, Govt of India.

11th Plan strategy on tourism is to achieve International tourist arrivals of 10 million. By the end of the 11th Plan through diversification of source markets increase per capita spending and length of stay of international visitors and by reducing seasonality. The Plan also proposes to achieve a level of 760 million domestic tourists by 2011 at an annual growth rate of 12 % and to increase accommodation units. In order to achieve all these objectives, the Working Group felt that it was necessary that the momentum generated in tourism sector during the 10th Plan period is sustained. The recommendation of the Group is to adopt and apply sustainable practices and principles, and identify and resolve the constraints. The Working Group also felt it necessary that beside development of world class infrastructure and launching aggressive marketing campaigns, access & connectivity to India is in need to be improved; new forms of tourism like rural tourism, cultural tourism, adventure tourism, cruise tourism, MICE tourism and medical tourism are taken up with new passion & efforts. Tourism in India has come into its own as a brand – India Tourism. There have been several innovative approaches in the Ministry’s policy in 2009-10. The creation of niche tourism products like heliport tourism, medical tourism, wellness tourism, adventure tourism, cruise tourism and caravan tourism has served to widen the net of this sector.
**Table 5.1.** Ministry of Tourism, Government of India’s Participation in International Event for Medical Tourism Promotion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr No.</th>
<th>Name of the Medical Tourism Fairs &amp; Events</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Places</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Arab Health</td>
<td>24th -27th January 2011</td>
<td>Dubai</td>
<td>Middle East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>ATM</td>
<td>2nd to 5th May 2011</td>
<td>Dubai</td>
<td>Middle East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Moscow Medical a Health Tourism Congress, Russia</td>
<td>16th -19th March, 2011</td>
<td>Moscow</td>
<td>CIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Destination Health, Health &amp; Medical Tourism Show, London,</td>
<td>15th -16th April, 2011</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Namaskar Africa</td>
<td>15th-16th October, 2011</td>
<td>Addis Ababa, Ethiopia</td>
<td>Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>World Travel Mart  2009</td>
<td>7th to 10th Nov, 2011</td>
<td>London, U.K.</td>
<td>Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>ITB Berlin 2010</td>
<td>9th to 13th March 2011</td>
<td>Berlin, Germany</td>
<td>Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>European Medical Travel Conference</td>
<td>27th to 29th April 2011</td>
<td>Barcelona Spain</td>
<td>Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Medcon 2011</td>
<td>10-12 May, 2011</td>
<td>Muscat, Oman</td>
<td>Middle East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Medi Tour Expo</td>
<td>23-24th May, 2011</td>
<td>Las Vegas NV</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Ministry of Tourism, Govt of India website*

Government of Maharashtra has also taken initiatives for development and promotion of medical tourism. According to Maharashtra Tourism Policy 2006, Mumbai being the financial capital of the
country and the biggest business centre, it naturally attracts a large number of visitors all year. Mumbai receives about 35% of the foreign tourist arrivals in India. It is also estimated that about 70% of tourists from the South-East Asian countries regard Mumbai as a gateway city while visiting India. Maharashtra will aim to tap this potential by promoting its tourism to this captive base of visitors.

Mumbai’s glamour and glitter, shopping plazas and malls, indomitable spirit of its people and the large number of interesting places make it a destination of choice. This tourism policy envisages a special focus on Mumbai to develop a Convention Centre, a Mumbai Haat, a “Bollywood" Theme park and other attractions to make Mumbai an unlimited tourism destination. Apart from the existing tourist attractions in Mumbai, the concept of Medical Tourism will be developed and marketed at international tourism forum.

5.1.2 MVISA (Medical VISA)

Indian consulates and missions abroad face a growing number of inquiries about MVISA (Medical Visa). The Indian Ministry of Tourism’s 13 overseas offices are stocked with in-formation for those intending to travel to India for medical treatment. The new M-visas are valid for a year and are issued for companions too. India’s efforts to promote medical tourism took off in late 2002, when the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) produced a study on the country’s medical tourism sector, in collaboration with international management consultants, McKinsey & Company, which outlined immense potential for the sector.

The Indian Missions/Posts abroad may scrutinize the medical documents very carefully and satisfy themselves about the bonafide purpose for which medical treatment visa is being requested. Mission may satisfy that the applicant has sought preliminary medical advice from his country of origin/country of residence and he has been advised to go for specialized medical treatment. In case the foreign national desires to go for treatment under the Indian system of Medicines, his case may also be considered².

² Ministry of Tourism, Medical VISA., Medical VISA
This type of visa should be granted for seeking medical attendance only in reputed / recognized specialized hospitals/ treatment centers in the country. Although non exhaustive, following illustrative list of ailments would be of primary consideration; serious ailments like neuro-surgery; ophthalmic disorders; heart related problems; renal disorders; organ transplantations; plastic surgery; joint replacement etc.. The basic idea would be that the mission may satisfy the need of the foreign national to come to India for medical treatment/ health enhancements.

**Validity of visa and extension of visa**

The initial period for such a visa may be up to a period of one year or for the period of treatment, whichever less, and can be extended for a further period up to one year be the State Government/ FRROs on the production of medical certificate/ advice from the reputed/ recognized/ specialized hospitals in the country. Any further extension will be granted by the Ministry of Home Affairs only on the recommendations of the State Government/ FRROs supported by appropriate Medical documents. Such visa will be valid for maximum three entries during one year. State Government/ FRROs may permit one additional entry in emergent situation if required. Foreigners coming on ‘M visa’ will be required to get themselves registered mandatorily well within the period of 14 days of arrival with the concerned FRROs/ FROs

**MX VISA**

Attendant/family members of the patient coming to India for medical treatment shall be granted miscellaneous visa co-terminus with the ‘M Visa’ of the patient. Such visa may be granted to the spouse/ children or those who have blood relations with the patient. However, not more than two attendants may be allowed at a time for granting of miscellaneous visa. Such foreigners are also required to get themselves registered with the local FRROs/ FROs well within 14 days from the date of arrival.

The CII estimates that 150 000 medical tourists came to India in 2005, based on feedback from the organization’s member hospitals. Figures for M-visa entrants are not readily available. Patients prefer to come on ordinary tourist visas to avoid the M-visa’s requirement that they register with the regional authorities within two weeks of arrival (Aditya, 2006). As per the findings and
literature reviewed many medical tourist are obtaining tourist visa instead of M-VISA for medical treatment, the reason for which are lengthy documentation procedure, VISA Fees and duration. The impact was that in last two years, the number of international patients decreased when compared to the year 2009-11. Healthcare service providers big group of hospitals used to get 1000 patient per year, which is now down the figure 40%. Researchers, industry stakeholders are demanding for to changes in M-VISA policy and guideline.

The government is likely to liberalise rules for medical visas, including reduction in visa fee, increase in frequency of visits and exemption from police reporting for patients, as per a TOI report. According to the Tourism and Home ministries, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) agreed to address issues like reduction in visa fee and not treating a visit to a hospital while being on a tourist visa as a criminal offence. Agreed to the issue a circular that reporting to Foreigner Regional Registration Offices was not required if the medical visa was for less than 180 days visitors on a medical visa will also be granted four entries in a year instead of the present three unless the visa holder comes to the adverse notice of the police. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) will also consider the proposal that a patient's attendants should be given emergency entry and medical re-entry visas.

A committee is likely to be set up under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to look into all issues relating to medical visas and will include representatives from Tourism and Health ministries as well as health industry associations as members.

5.1.3 MDA Schemes (Marketing & Development Assistance)

In the year 2009, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India had revised guidelines for MDA Scheme. Revised Guidelines in supersession of the Guidelines dated 22.02.2009\(^3\) were issued in respect of the Marketing Development Assistance Scheme (MDA) for Medical Tourism administered by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

The revised guidelines are as under Financial support under the MDA Scheme will be provided to approved medical tourism service providers, i.e. Representatives of Hospitals accredited by Joint

---

\(^3\) Government of India, “Guideline MDA Scheme”, 2009, 1–12. Revised Guideline of MDA Scheme
Commission for International Accredited Hospitals (JCI), National Accreditation Board of Hospitals (NABH) and Medical Tourism facilitators (Travel Agents/Tour Operators are approved by Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. They are engaged in Medical Tourism hereinafter referred as MTSP and to the approved Wellness Centers hereinafter referred as WTSP i.e. representative of the Wellness Centers accredited by the State Governments till the guidelines of AYUSH - NABH for accreditation are finalized. Once these guidelines are finalized and operationalized then Wellness Centers accredited by AYUSH - NABH will be considered under MDA Scheme for undertaking the following tourism promotional activities abroad.

For participation in approved Medical/Tourism Fairs/Medical Conferences /Wellness conferences/Wellness Fairs and its allied Road Shows The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India would provide financial assistance to MTSP for hospitals accredited by Joint Commission The International Accredited Hospitals (JCI) National Accreditation Board of Hospitals (NABH), Medical Tourism facilitators (Travel Agents/Tour Operators approved by Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and engaged in Medical Tourism) and WTSP are accredited by the State Government till the guidelines of AYUSH and NABH are finalized. Once the guidelines of AYUSH - NABH are finalized are operationalized then wellness centers accredited by AYUSH - NABH will be considered for participation.

5.1.4 Wellness Tourism Promotion

India has always been known for its rich heritage of ‘Wellness’ traditions and has enormous possibilities to offer to ‘Wellness’ seekers. The Indian ‘Wellness’ industry is one of the fastest growing segment of the travel and leisure industry. India has the potential to become an attractive ‘Wellness’ destination for the global travelers. Therefore, there is need to position India as a centre of ‘Wellness’ that has been an integral part of the Indian way of life. Realizing this potential to develop ‘Wellness’ Tourism as a niche tourism product for attracting both domestic and international tourists, the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, is formulating guidelines to develop and promote India as a ‘Wellness’ destination.
To promote India as a multiple tourism attraction destination offering varied niche products to make India a 365 days destination. The following are the broad areas of financial assistance by which the Ministry of Tourism seeks to support initiatives of the stakeholders to promote ‘Wellness’ Tourism.

Ministry of Tourism would provide financial assistance for developing publicity material like brochures, print creative, audio video presentations, short films, radio jingles, creation of websites, online creative etc. to promote ‘Wellness’ Tourism. The financial assistance would be provided on a 67:33 sharing basis with 67% of contribution from Ministry of Tourism and 33% from stakeholders based on the recommendations of the ‘Wellness Tourism’ Promotion Committee subject to a maximum sale of Rs 50 lakhs per year. This support would not be eligible for media spends like release of advertisements in print television or internet.

The Ministry of Tourism would provide financial assistance to State Govt. / Union Territory Administrations, ‘Wellness’ Centers accredited by National Board for Accreditation of Hospitals and Healthcare Services (NABH) for capacity building programmes for its Capacity Building for Service Providers Scheme (CBSP)

The Ministry of Tourism would continue to extend support for participation in the International ‘Wellness’ Tourism events duly identified and approved by Ministry of Tourism under the existing guidelines for Market Development Assistance(MDA) for ‘Wellness Tourism’ Service Providers (WTSP)

**Participation in Wellness Tourism International Events**

The Ministry of Tourism would participate in International ‘Wellness’ Events through its overseas offices. The Wellness Tourism Promotion Committee would draw out a calendar of events and share it with all concerns.
Domestic Events

The Ministry of Tourism would provide financial assistance for four seminars/events in a financial year with a ceiling of Rs. 10.00 lakh each on a 50:50 sharing basis\(^4\). The Committee on ‘Wellness Tourism’ would decide the detailed criteria and modalities for the scheme.

Use of Incredible India Logo

The Ministry of Tourism would permit the use of logo for promotion of prestigious national and international Wellness events recommended by the Wellness Tourism Promotion Committee, as per the policy laid by Ministry of Tourism from time to time.

Wellness Tourism\(^n\) Promotion Committee (WTPC)

The Ministry of Tourism would constitute the WTPC consisting of stakeholders in the field of ‘Wellness Tourism’ and representatives of the concerned administrative ministries including the Ministry of Tourism. The Committee members would be nominated by the Ministry of Tourism for a period of two years.

The expenditure for the financial assistance for activities as mentioned above, excluding international events, would be met from the Domestic Publicity and Promotion including hospitality, head. The overseas office will meet the expenditure on international event from their own promotional budgets.

5.1.5 Indian State’s Initiatives

At the state level, some state Governments are participating in healthcare tourism expos abroad. Such activities are being used as a platform to meet international experts from the medical fraternity and brief them about the competence of Indian healthcare industry in general, and the healthcare sector in the state, in particular. Further, at the state level, several initiatives are taken by the industry in association with the state governments.

Kerala has made concrete efforts to promote healthcare tourism, leveraging Ayurveda, in a big way, which has resulted in a substantial increase of visitor arrivals into the state. Since early 1990s Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC), has been promoting Ayurveda under the banner of healthcare tourism, and has started Ayurveda health centers in its hotels. KTDC has also tied up with reputed Ayurveda centers in order to provide authentic treatment to the international travelers to Kerala. The Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala has classified the Ayurveda centers in two categories - Green Leaf and Olive Leaf – a sort of accreditation or grading of centres. With such initiatives, Kerala and Ayurveda have virtually become synonymous with each other. The current trends show that Kerala is emerging as a modern healthcare provider with significant collaborations of entrepreneurs in the private healthcare sector and the tourism industry.

In Karnataka, the state is in the process of setting up of a Bangalore International Health City Corporation, which will offer patients a wide variety of health care products and treatments. The Government of Karnataka is also in the process of leveraging the state’s IT prowess to tap business in the healthcare outsourcing services. Leveraging IT skills would help enhance Karnataka’s position in associated services to the growing healthcare sector such as medical billing, disease coding, forms processing and claims settlement. Karnataka is also bidding high on Telemedicine, a concept by which patients can be treated even when the doctor is geographically placed in another area.

In Maharashtra, the Infrastructure Development and Support Act (MIDAS) of Maharashtra has granted the tourism activity with an industry status, with the objective of granting all the benefits and incentives that are given to other industries. This Act would also empower the Maharashtra Tourism Development Council (MTDC) as a Special Planning Authority, to procure and provide land available at various tourism estates without needing approval from the Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC). In Maharashtra, the industry in association with the State Government has set up Medical Tourism Council of Maharashtra.
Gujarat is one of the few states in India to announce a separate policy for medical tourism, with the objective of creating integrated medical tourism circuits based on the location of specialty hospitals, heritage and culture. In addition, Gujarat is in the process of setting up a Healthcare Tourism Council in association with the healthcare and tourism industry\(^5\).

Goa, which has been for long attracting tourists for its beaches and exotic cuisine, has fine-tuned the hospitality skills into an art, and is now attracting healthcare tourists with focus on cosmetic treatments. There are other policies and schemes of Government of India too and have started some of new plans to implement.

Plate 5.1  Government Organization & Ministry Visit, Mumbai

Researcher at Mantralay, Mumbai

Researcher at India Tourism Office, Ministry of Tourism Government of India and Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation, Mumbai