HEALTH TOURISM - EVOLUTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract
This study presents the evolution of health tourism from antiquity to the present, and tries to highlight a conceptual analysis of health tourism, given its complexity of influence on the physical and mental level, from conception to the end of life, including all the aspect of life, physically and mentally.

Key words*: health tourism, medical tourism, wellness, niche tourism, babymoon tourism.*

JEL Classification: F68, I15, L83

1. INTRODUCTION

Within the past five years, global tourism has reached new heights. International tourists now account for more than 1 billion travel arrivals and $1 trillion in spending abroad. By 2025, the growth in travel spending is broadly expected to outpace the global economy.

Internationally, health tourism is growing by 30% per year, being an extremely dynamic segment with the highest growth in the last 5 years, the world market for medical tourism is currently estimated to be about $ 100 billion.

There are a number of reasons why patients seek care internationally rather than obtaining the services in their own country of residence. The reasons may include non-availability of services locally, lack of insurance coverage, long waiting time, higher quality and lower cost in the destination countries, possibility of combining medical care with tourism, other factors related to personal taste and preferences. Lower transportation costs, instant electronic communication system, low time costs of travel have enabled many countries to enter the medical tourism market.

A report by Visa and Oxford Economics show that health tourism will grow by up to 25% every year for the next decade as the competition for health tourists between countries have becomes fiercer. Medical procedures ranging from cosmetic surgery, dental work, to orthopedic surgery can now be provided at high quality and affordable rates in many countries. As listed by Healthy Travel Media, publisher of Patients Beyond Borders, the top 10 medical tourism destinations around the world are: India, Brasil, Malaysia, Thailanda, Turkey, Mexico, Costa Rica, Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore.

2. ANALYSIS OF THE SPECIALIZED LITERATURE

Due to its appearance in ancient times and its very wide content, medical tourism has a multitude of definitions in the literature, with numerous published studies.

Health tourism is an old and modern concept at the same time, which focuses on the importance of the medical act for the development of a community and is defined by moving patients from developed countries in order to obtain cheaper medical care and services or the phenomenon of traveling abroad for health care.

Health tourism is not synonymous with medical tourism, health tourism including medical tourism, as the main component, but being much more complex putting its mark on all sides of human existence, with emphasis on prevention and wellbeing.

According to the definition of the World Tourism Organization (WTO), in health tourism the main purpose of people who travel is to consume advanced health services in other countries or regions. The main form of health tourism is medical tourism.

Carrera and Bridges define health tourism as the trip organized by a person outside his residence in order to maintain, increase or revive his mental and bodily well-being, wellbeing in mind and body.

Tram (2006) defines the medical tourist as one who includes people who go to another country for a period of at least 24 hours for the treatment of diseases, maintaining health (yoga, massage), beauty (plastic surgery) and fertility treatment.

According to the OECD, medical tourism is tourism in which consumers choose to cross at least the national border with the intention of obtaining medical treatment at the destination. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) believes that the main purpose of these tourists is to consume advanced health services in other countries or regions.

Bookman s (2007), defines medical tourism as an economic activity that involves trade in services and

represents a combination of at least two sectors: medicine and tourism.

Lee and Spisto (2007) define medical tourism as tourism activity that involves a medical procedure combined with activities that promote tourist well-being.

The literature captures the complexity of health tourism by defining medical tourism as: international medical services that involve a trip (Fedorov et al., 2009, Cormany and Baloglu, 2010, Crozier and Baylis, 2010), outsourcing of medical services (Jones and Keith , 2006), medical refugees (Milstein and Smith, 2006) and even biotech pilgrims (Song, 2010).

Kangas evokes the fact that medical tourism is "a term that suggests spending free time to restore health, not taking into account the suffering that patients go through.

So health tourism, in addition to medical tourism, combines other classic or adjacent forms of tourism, including spa, seaside or mountain tourism, with an emphasis on prevention and weelbeing.

3. EVOLUTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES OF HEALTH TOURISM

Health tourism was one of the first forms of tourism, with roots dating back to antiquity. So the practice of travel for medical reasons has a long history. Ancient civilizations used the therapeutic effects of mineral hot springs. Some evidence suggests that more than four thousand years ago the Sumerians built health complexes around the springs that included temples with flowing basins.

Health tourism is also practiced in ancient Greece, on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea to the Saronic Gulf and Epidaurus and in spas and sanatoriums.

The therapeutic effects of the mineral thermal springs and the baths of sacred temples were much appreciated by the Greeks and then by the Romans, who also built health spas. The ancient Greeks were also known for spiritual tourism in order to heal themselves, they traveled at the sanctuary of the god Asklepios, believing that they would be healed. - today considered as the birthplace of medical tourism, the sanctuary was a small space called Epidauria in the Saronic Gulf.

In the 16th and 17th centuries in Europe, the modern concept of leisure resort appeared, such as the seaside resorts in Great Britain (such as Blackpool or Margate) appreciated for their healing effects in the sea and sea air.

In continental Europe, spas and mineral water in Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Romania have been used to cure diseases such as various skin infections, deficient digestion and rheumatism.

Since the 1600's, America has also appreciated spa tourism, appearing as a receiving tourism, tuberculosis patients in Europe have often traveled (and lived) in the southwestern United States, looking for different climatic conditions to improve their health.

Medical tourism is not missing from the history of Asia either.Japan's affluence of natural mineral springs (also known as *onsen*) has represented a favorite health retreat for centuries, and they are also a central feature of Japanese tourism today. These springs are known to have healing powers derived from its mineral content.

Yoga and Ayurvedic medicine grew in popularity five thousand years ago in India, wherein constant streams of medical travelers and spiritual students flocked to pursue the benefits of these alternative-healing methods. India procured reputation as the center of Eastern spiritual, cultural and medicinal progress when Buddhism came along 2500 years later. Today it is one of the most popular destinations for medical tourists.(T. Mestrovic, 2018)

Health tourism is used on a large scale internationally alongside the notion of medical tourism, and this lack of clarity has led to the association of health tourism with the terms wellness, prevention, and disease cure (Nahrstedt, 2004, p. 6). Thus, according to Hall (Hall, 1992, p. 151) cited by Koncul (Koncul, 2012, p. 527), health tourism includes activities such as engaging in healthy activities, traveling for a sauna, massage, and other health activities.

In recent years, medical tourism continued its massive growth both in number of tourists, in number of countries with attractive offers, but also with a wide range of forms of adjective tourism. More than 20 million people will travel to another country for medical treatments according to Patients Beyond Borders.

Tourists from less developed countries look for high quality medical services, offered with high-performance equipment, which do not exist in their countries, and tourists from rich countries choose medical services from other countries where prices are lower, or where even illegally tourism such as transplant tourism.

Due to its implications, health tourism can be considered the most complete type of tourism, given that human well-being is given by the three sides of his body, mind and spirit, including or having tangents with many other types.

Regarding its forms, we consider health tourism to be very complex comprising classic forms of health tourism, such as spa tourism, modern forms (dental, surgical, fertilization tourism) but also controversial forms of niche tourism, such as suicide tourism, transplant tourism, sex tourism. Health tourism includes medical tourism, but also related, tangential forms such as religious or meditation tourism, coastal or mountain tourism, rural tourism, relaxation and rest tourism, sexual tourism.

So, we consider that health tourism includes this forms presented in the next table.

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	Health tourism forms
1.	Medical tourism
2.	Surgical tourism
3.	Transplant tourism
4.	Dental tourism
5.	Surrogacy tourism
6.	Tourism for fertilization
7.	Babymoon tourism
8.	Birth tourism
9.	Tourism for euthanasia
10.	Suicidal tourism
11.	Weellness and medical spa
12.	Tourism for nutrition and obesity
13.	Tourism for meditations, yoga
14.	Religious tourism
15.	Antiaging and beauty
16.	Spa tourism
17.	Relaxation and rest tourism
18.	Coastal tourism
19.	Mountain tourism
20.	Agrotourism, rural tourism
21.	Sex tourism

Physically, health tourism reaches the human need to solve pressing health problems through surgical, dental tourism or the treatment of very serious diseases, stem-cell tourism (going to destinations where clinics offer stem-cell treatments) continuing with spa tourism for health recovery treatments or prevention. It continues with coastal tourism or mountain tourism which through climatic factors improves the health of people with respiratory problems, but not only, and ending with relaxation and rest tourism, which invigorates the physical strength of tourists.

As a consequence of urbanization, many people spend their entire day in offices and then in crowded and polluted spaces. For them, the contact with nature, with the green and blue offered by it, leads to a restoration, maintenance or improvement of physic and mental health, a fact proven by numerous studie and recognized by corporations, which choose t periodically send their precious employees on min vacations.

Analyzing the psychic side, health touris includes tourism for meditation, yoga, along with tourism for relaxation and rest. Even religious tourism can be incorporated into health tourism, if the tourist goal is to achieve peace and inner peace.

Regarding the human being, health tourism w can say that it can make its presence felt from creatio to the end, including fertility tourism, surogac tourism, babymoon tourism, birth tourism, continuin with the forms of medical tourism itself or wellness an ending with suicidal or euthanasia tourism.

Fertility tourism ", which effectively help families to have a child, (IT is a journalistic eye - catcher focusing on the phenomenon of patients wh search for a reproductive treatment in another countr in order to circumvent laws, access restrictions, or waiting lists in their home country).

Babymoon turism, describe a vacation taken by a couple that is expecting a baby in order to allow the couple to enjoy a final trip together before the many sleepless nights that usually accompany a newborn baby. Babymoons usually take place at a resort that offers appropriate services like prenatal massage. Babymoon can also be used for a trip taken by a couple even before they get pregnant. As long as the trip is intended to be a final romantic fling before venturing into parenthood, the term babymoon applies.

Birth tourism is driven either by medical problems or by the parents' desire for future children to benefit from another citizenship or other benefits.

Tourism for nutrition and obesity, tourism for beauty, anti-aging is important for health, too.

According to Global Wellness Tourism Economy (Global Wellness Institute, 2013: 7, 2015), wellness is defined as "a physical, mental and social state rounded by well-being" and emphasizes pro-active care and improvement of health and well-being.

According to WHO, "transplant tourism" refers to patients travelling across the borders to be transplanted elsewhere. People tend to travel for transplantation, either because it is not available in their home country, such as Tajikistan and Azerbaijan, or if the facilities are adequate in their home land, there are not enough organs available.

Transplant tourism takes place in two different situations: 1) in very well developed countries with long waiting list, and 2) in underdeveloped countries with no prohibitory regulations for buying and selling the kidney but the people are indigent and have to make money by selling their organs.

Since the early 2000s, meditation has rapidly increased in popularity and social status, and is now promoted as a health and well-being practice.

The main reasons patients seek care at health and medical tourism destinations are:

Low cost medical services

- No insurance/inadequate insurance
- Plastic and cosmetic surgery

Bariatric surgery and body contouring

- Gender reassignment procedures
- Treatment of infertility

2. Procedure or quality not available in home country

Newly developed procedures not approved by regulatory agencies – Stem cell therapy – Joint resurfacing – Artificial disc replacement (multi-level)

Procedures unavailable or restricted by society and/or legal system – Organ transplantation – In-vitro fertilization with donor eggs, surogacy, euthanasia

Avoid waiting lists and confidentiality for patients undergoing plastic surgery, sex change procedures and drug rehabilitation

3. Wellbeing, recreation and meditation

Babymoon tourism

Obesity and nutrition

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- Meditation
- Recreation in luxurious, exotic destinations
- Sex tourism

The most important destination for health tourism are: Canada, Costa Rica, India, Israel, Jordan, Mexico, Singapore, Thailand, Turkey, United States.

4.CONCLUSIONS

Due to its complexity health tourism is very important for citizens. That's why the government must support this form of tourism in particular, because it has not only a positive impact on local and national economies, but also on the population as a whole.

Medical tourism is an expanding phenomenon, which can be considered as an engine for relaunching the economy. At the same time, this activity leads to a dizzying increase in the income of the medical staff, which prevents their migration. In addition to all the positive effects of medical tourism in host countries, there are still negative effects due to the risk of creating an unfair medical system for the country's poorest citizens.

Medical tourism is facing globally the lack of accurate data on the magnitude of the phenomenon and the lack of transparency of the quality of medical care and health care services.

It is essential that governments clearly understand medical tourism needs and expectations and are involved in the healthy development of this sector.

It is increasingly apparent that medical tourism is changing the healthcare landscape in industrialized and developing countries around the world, and there is every reason to believe that this trend will continue to evolve.

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