

Hungary: A Country Not Only for Dental Tourists

The Hungarian medical tourism industry caters to a huge portion of all European dental tourists. 40% of all European medical tourists enter the country regularly in search of various medical services with a greater portion of this percentage coming from the western parts Europe.

Recently however, Hungary has been making efforts to shed off its image as a predominantly dental treatments destination with the intense promotion of other medical procedures. A number of clinics in Hungary offer medical tourism packages, which include organizing the transfers and treatments, flights and accommodation.



The Hungarian medical institutions have had a lot of experience and practice in this industry since the 1980s. Hungary's entry into the European Union greatly improved and diversified medical tourism in the country. Among the treatments and medical services offered are: cosmetic, orthopedic and eye surgery, fertility, anti-aging, addiction and obesity treatments, spa and wellness treatments, even cardiac rehabilitation treatments, etc.

Average Cost of Medical Procedures

On average, most medical procedures in Hungary cost between 40 and 70% less than in the US, the Scandinavian countries and other places in Europe.

Hungary has dozens of world class medical institutions, with a majority of these offering special programs for foreign patients. These institutions are covered under a number of accreditation and licensing schemes. These schemes include the National Health Commission and the Medical Service domestic accreditation schemes from the Hungarian Ministry of Health.

The Hungarian Law on Medical Tourism

Just like other major players in the market, Hungary is a successful medical tourist destination because of the leniency of its laws.

The laws governing medical practice in Hungary allow even single women to undergo fertility treatment. The country has no waiting list for IVF. A good number of the fertility patients get their first initial consultation with fertility specialists just within a month of first contact.



General Figures

The Hungarian dental tourism market alone makes the country the 2nd largest destination in the international market, with a total market share of about 16%, just behind Mexico's 20%. The dental tourists' traffic in Hungary in 2007 and 2008, generated revenues worth about USD 600 million for the Hungarian dental practitioners and hoteliers

2010 and 2011 alone saw about 80,000 foreigners enter the country for various medical procedures. In 2007 and 2008 slightly more than 100,000 tourists entered Hungary for a number of dental procedures. It is estimated that the yield from GCC countries alone will increase to between USD 70 and 90 million by 2015.

Below are the yearly averages for the biggest source countries to the Hungarian medical tourism market, according to data gathered over a 2-year period. Based on this data, the yearly averages may increase by approximately 15% per 2–3 years.

1. UK 23,500 people per year
2. Austria 16,000 people per year
3. Germany 13,500 people per year
4. France 7,000 people per year
5. Smaller markets 12,500 people per year

Problems and Challenges

1. Lack of accreditation by international bodies

Most of the hospitals and clinics in the country lack some of the most important forms of international endorsements such as the JCI. This makes it difficult for a number of institutions to get any considerable share of international patients.

2. The Hungarian medical tourism market is mainly dominated by small clinics.

Most of the major hospitals in the country cater only to domestic patients, leaving the international market to smaller institutions with less experience or capacity to handle such a demanding market.



3. Rising premiums on medical malpractice insurance coverage.

The steadily increasing number of malpractice law suits that end in compensation have prompted many insurance providers to increase their premiums on medical malpractice coverage. This in turn makes catering to international patients quite expensive for the local institutions.

Future Plans

The Hungarian Medical Tourism Office Ltd., which manages the Hungarian Dental Tourism Development Program, is planning to roll out a system that will make dental procedures for medical tourists in Hungary a lot safer. The organization intends to achieve this through a quality-monitoring and accreditation system. This is aimed at increasing revenue and patient turnover through the use of world-class procedures and equipment.

The program, expected to bear fruit in about 3 years, will double the revenue and current number of tourists into the country in search of cheaper and good quality medical attention. This number of tourists may also triple along with the revenue, in about 5 years.

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