

# German Hospitals Attract Russian and Mid-Eastern Patients

Germany is known for having one of the best healthcare systems globally. Thanks to that, the country enjoys the status of being a popular medical tourism destination. People travel from everywhere in the world to take advantage of the high quality medical treatment the country provides.



## Growing Industry

Most German states are involved in providing treatment to foreign patients, including Bavaria, Berlin, Brandenburg, Hamburg, Hessen, Lower Saxony, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Rhineland-Pfalz and Saxony. Certain states are more popular for medical treatment in different regions of the world. For example, Arabic speakers are more inclined to seek treatment in Bavaria and Hessen, while Russian tourists tend to favor Saxony, with its capital, Dresden, being known especially for its child rehabilitation and cancer treatment. Medical tourism also benefits other towns, which can be seen in the town of Radeburg near Dresden, one of the most popular destinations for overnight stays among Russian tourists.

The contribution of medical and health tourism to economic growth is on the rise. Globally, the industry is growing by 20–30% annually and was estimated to be a \$100 billion sector at the end of 2012.

German hospitals and doctors gain significant economic benefit from medical tourism, with revenues of €1 billion (\$1.35 billion) annually. In 2011 over 200,000 patients from foreign countries were treated in Germany, consisting of 82,854 inpatients and 123,000 outpatients.

Germany's status as a leading healthcare country has been fostered by the system's exceptional organization, management, training and quality control. It has led to increased overseas demand from both patients and healthcare professionals for access to its hospitals, education and research facilities. Most people seeking treatment and ideas come from Russia, Greece, China and several Arabic speaking nations.

Many German states that serve as medical tourism destinations also take part in active promotions of the services they offer. For example, Saxony has promoted its healthcare in the Middle East, and has

also published brochures in Russian and Chinese containing information about healthcare training and further education opportunities. State and German government agencies are also being used to promote medical tourism in different regions of the country.

An initiative called Health – Made in Germany was launched to build the German Hospital Directory. This is a comprehensive listing on the internet which is being expanded to address the needs of foreigners interested in getting treatment in Germany. The key goal of the website, accessible in German and English, is to assist foreign patients to identify a suitable German hospital or health facility for their needs.



### **Russian Patients**

The majority of patients the country receives outside of the European Union are from Russia, totally about 6,000 inpatients annually. Figures show that the number of Russians has climbed six-fold, from 1,181 Russian inpatients in 2003 to 6,175 in 2011.

In Russia, medical treatment in Germany has been long regarded as a special privilege, continuing from the 19th century when famous Russian writers Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Nikolai Gogol travelled to the country for its curing abilities. In the modern period, several Russian dignitaries have sought treatment in Germany. Former President Boris Yeltsin was treated at Berlin's German Heart Institute, with five bypass surgeries and frequent visits. Former First Lady Raisa Gorbachev received treatment at Münster University Hospital for leukemia.

The recent rise in Russian patients travelling to Germany can also be attributed to the Russian healthcare system. Since 2000, hospital numbers have reduced by nearly half, and existing hospitals are facing equipment shortage, lack of hygiene and workforce shortages due to underpaid doctors leaving the country. On the other hand, Germany has a robust healthcare system, complete with highly trained doctors and first-class medical facilities, offering superior medical treatment to paying Russians.

### **Mid-Eastern Clients**

There has also been an increase in the number of medical tourists from the Middle East to Germany, which is growing by over 6% each year. Apparently, UAE residents spend up to \$2 billion each year on travel for healthcare reasons, and it appears that many are choosing Germany as their destination.



Up to 80% of Mid-Eastern guests in the three German Rocco Forte hotels are there for medical treatment. Rocco Forte Hotels are closely connected with a number of renowned surgeons who specialize in treating diseases that tend to be common in the Middle East, like diabetes, renal disease and coronary heart disease. Frankfurt's Villa Kennedy has one such doctor as a close contact, Dr Ulrich Mondorf, and Berlin's Hotel de Rome is home to one of the city's leading hospitals, DRK Kliniken hospital.

Hotel services have been designed to cater to the needs of guests from Middle East and recuperating patients. These include a medical concierge who works closely with hospitals, as well as Arabic speaking employees and Arab chefs.

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