

SINGAPORE WANTS TO BECOME NO. 1 IN MEDICAL TOURISM



Medical tourism is booming in Singapore, a city-state with a population of 4.4 million. Ministry of Health claims that there were some 374,000 medical tourists in 2005 and some 50,000 more last year. The government wants to attract some 1 million international patients a year by 2012. Singapore Tourism Board expects the medical tourism industry to earn some 3 billion Singapore dollars (about 1.95 billion U.S. dollars) and provide 13,000 jobs by 2012.

The government plans the city-state to become a top provider of quality healthcare services in the region. The plans include building of at least one or two new private hospitals to meet the increased demand from foreign patients.

Nowadays more and more people come to seek medical treatment in Singapore. There are visitors e.g. from Russia, Bangladesh and the Middle East. "Parkway hospitals" is Asia's biggest private healthcare group that owns three private hospitals in Singapore: East Shore, Gleneagles and Mount Elizabeth. One of surgeries done in this state is the liver transplant. The Living Donor Liver Transplant (LDLT) programme at Gleneagles gets 80 per cent of patients from overseas. The fact is that in Singapore, unlike in India, law allows transplants in situations where there is an emotional link between the donor and recipient.

However, there still is a stiff competition in this field of business. Countries like India, Malaysia or Thailand are also building medical tourism industries.

There is also spa industry in Singapore and so patients may connect their stay with a visit of a spa. The numbers of spas in the city have grown. Nowadays there are 173 spas currently open and operating. Popular is e.g. aromatherapy that is practiced by 97% of spas. Julie Garrow, Managing Director of Intelligent Spas, says that spa numbers are predicted to grow another 11% over the next two years.

Date: 2007-02-06

Article link:

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