

# 70% OF UAE RESIDENTS WOULD OPT FOR MEDICAL TOURISM



The United Arab Emirates certainly is an interesting tourism destination. Everyone can see the huge investments in tourism infrastructure and attractions. However, one sector obviously does not lure as many customers as would the officials imagine. It is the health care sector as according to a recent survey the majority of UAE residents would travel abroad to receive medical treatment.

According to a survey conducted by the international research organization YouGov for the UAE based "National newspaper" from July 24 to 28, **over 70 per cent of UAE residents would prefer to go abroad for medical treatment** if they fall seriously ill. Only 21 per cent of all respondents would put their faith in UAE healthcare. The percentage differs in relation to respondents' nationality. Surprisingly 57 percent of Emiratis themselves would go abroad for a treatment. If we look closer to individual groups of respondents, 71 per cent of Asians, 57 per cent of westerners and 42 percent of Arab expats would prefer to avoid the UAE health care system and rather receive treatment in their home countries. 45 per cent of the surveyed claimed that their friends or family in UAE had already traveled abroad for medical treatment. Thirteen per cent of respondents traveled to foreign countries as medical tourists themselves.

Most of those who have already been abroad for medical treatment were westerners (27 per cent). The most popular medical tourism destination for UAE residents is India (57 per cent). Nevertheless, the percentage again differs in relation to the respondents' nationalities. Emiratis themselves prefer Thailand (64 per cent), westerners travel mainly to the UK (61 per cent).

The reasons for which UAE residents prefer foreign medical facilities are according to their words the costs (20 per cent), better medical expertise abroad (33 per cent) and also distrust in local healthcare system (25 per cent). In light of these numbers, it seems surprising that UAE officials want the country to become a medical tourism destination. **Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing has even predicted that 11 million medical tourists would visit the UAE by 2010.**

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