

SWITZERLAND BECOMES CAUTIOUS OVER U.S. MEDICAL TOURISTS



Zurich hospital in Switzerland, a prominent European force in medical tourism, has clamped down on the services offered to tourists from North America. The problem lies with the risks the Swiss medical associations are taking with getting either sued by the patients or being therefore forced to raise insurance premiums.

Ever since the 19th century, Switzerland has been known for medical tourism. At that time, **wealthy travellers used to come to the country to relax in spas** whilst enjoying spectacular mountainous scenery. Nowadays, the focus on the rich continues with recent medical visits from the late King Fahd of Saudi Arabia and the Italian president Berlusconi. Not being part of the European Union, Switzerland can offer something more and has technology to make surrounding countries jealous. Some medical tourists even buy just one-way tickets to Switzerland, due to the infamous euthanasia clinic.

Although visitors from North America make up a very small percentage of all medical tourists, they are indeed the most problematic. Most patients come from surrounding countries, the Middle East, or Russia. However, recently the renowned Zurich University Hospital has stopped treating tourists from the North America through fears of the threat of ensuing legal procedures. Most other medical facilities, although cautious, have not taken similar steps against this kind of patients.

The ban does not apply in emergency cases yet according to the hospital's representatives it was necessary to do something about the threat from across the Atlantic. To sum up, the attitude now is that treating Americans and Canadians is too risky and simply not worth it.

Applying litigation procedures is not part of the common culture in surrounding countries and Russia. Indeed, it is even impossible in some of the countries, which the medical tourists come from.

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