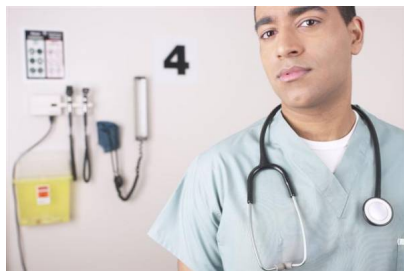


ISRAELI MEDICAL TOURISM HANDICAPS LOCALS



Israel has recently become attractive for many tourists because of its thriving medical tourism. They visit the country seeking medical treatment there for which they are willing to pay quite large sums of money. However, the local people have been losing out because of that.

The Israeli medical tourism industry is not really taking the 'first come, first served' route. Instead it is going through the 'he who pays more, wins' period. Admittedly, this is hardly unique to Israeli business, yet is becoming more noticeable and is beginning to bother local citizens. **30,000 tourists come to Israel on a yearly basis to make use of the medical treatment**, which are either not available or too expensive in their own countries. Most of them come from countries of the former Soviet Union.

It all sounds like great news. The Russians, in particular, are famous for being very generous when it comes to money and are happy to pay over the odds for things and services as long as they are available. However, Israel's oldest newspaper, Haaretz, has pointed out some problems with the situation and clearly wishes to emphasize that, although revenue is obviously welcome, charity should begin at home.

Due to the high spending, medical tourists are getting privileges, which Israelis can only dream of. Tourists are then able to choose their own doctors, their own rooms and wish basically almost anything and it is granted. They do not even necessarily have to be paying a lot more than the average Israeli taxpayer since there is now simply an attitude that these tourists deserve special treatment.

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