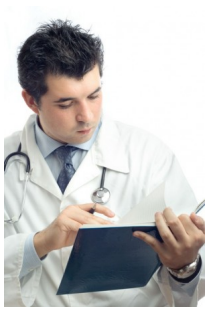


# Health Tourism in Belgium



The number of tourist coming to Belgium for medical care is steadily growing. And it pays of.

Patients from the UK come to Belgium not only because of long waiting periods but also because of the prices. Some treatments are cheaper in Belgium even if the traveler pays for the transport.

Belgian health ministry has no problem with health tourists. Jan Eyckmans, a spokesman for the Belgian health ministry says: "Accepting foreign patients does not cause us any problems as waiting lists or capacity is concerned". There are some 20,000 foreign patients in Belgian hospitals every year.

The most popular treatments are cosmetic and cardio thoracic surgeries. These two are the cheapest in the EU. And so this fact and also the exceptional quality of Belgian hospitals, brings clients from all over Europe. According to Jan Eyckmans liver, heart, lung and kidney transplants are popular with health tourists coming to his country.

Nowadays with cheap airlines it is easier than ever to travel abroad for medical care. Internet serves not only as a communication channel that connects patients and doctors around the world but is also very powerful because of advertisements. Guido Pennings, of the University of Ghent says that fertility tourism is increasing because people are able to get information from the Internet and because they do not mind traveling. He also says that "Some clinics facilitate foreign patients by offering packages, including visas, hotels and interpreters"

The medical staff of Belgium's hospitals is very highly educated. It takes at least 7 years to become a doctor and 12 years to be a specialist in Belgium. Many of the doctors speak English. Belgium's hospitals are among the best in Europe. E.g. the secondary infection rates average less than 0.5% compared with around 10% in the UK

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