

Global Spa Summit JOINING TOGETHER. SHAPING THE FUTURE.

Medical Tourism and the Role of Spas: Seizing the Opportunities!

General Session

Tuesday, May 19th, 2009 9:45am – 10:45am

La Salle Cote Jardin, Victoria-Jungfrau Grand Hotel & Spa, Interlaken, Switzerland

Introductions: Susie Ellis, President, SpaFinder Inc, United States

Presenters: Cynthia Carrion-Norton, Undersecretary, Philippine Department of Tourism, Philippines

Renee-Marie Stephano, Founder, Medical Tourism Association and Editor-in-chief, Medical Tourism Magazine, United States

Dr. David Vequist, IV, Director, Center for Medical Tourism Research, United States

Scribe: Aras Erekul (Cornell)



Renee-Marie Stephano

Medical tourism occurs when people travel to another country for better health care, whether it's for quality, better availability, accessibility, or price.

Wellness tourism occurs when people travel to another country for preventative, holistic, complementary/alternative medical therapies, as well as beauty and relaxation seeking better quality, availability, accessibility or pricing.

Types of Medical Tourism:

- Holistic (i.e spiritual, yoga, meditation, new age)
- Leisure and relaxation
- Medical – wellness
- Medical – therapy
- Medical – surgery

Patients are travelling for different reasons to different countries. Some examples include those from the U.S. looking for lower cost, those from the Middle East looking for better quality in Middle East, and those from south East Asia looking for better care.

Value of Medical Tourism = (Quality + Affordability + Access) of medical care + Perception of tourism in that country

Creating “Healthcare Clusters” can increase the overall quality and income for all institutions in a country, including hotels, hospitals, and spas, by facilitating marketing and providing a higher value package for people travelling from other countries. It enables you to create a brand for your healthcare industry by conveying credibility, reputability, and international recognition. Some countries with nice examples of healthcare clusters are Costa Rica, South Africa, and South Korea. Malaysia and Germany are currently creating their own healthcare clusters.

Either as a spa or a healthcare institution, you cannot assume that you can only market yourself to the best of your ability and guests and patients will flow. You have to build the credibility of your country in your respective field by collaboration between all institutions.

Dr. David Vequist

Current trends in medical tourism:

1. Patients are increasing their understanding of the market and the available global services
2. Price and quality is and will continue to be the key factor in terms of people’s preferences
3. Competition is heating up. There are now 30 countries and 300 JCI (Joint Commission International) accredited institutions. Also more and more medical tourism facilitators are competing for the same target market
4. Regions, countries, and specific providers are realizing their “core competencies” as a way to differentiate themselves from other competitors



Trends in spas:

1. Continuing pressure on service pricing
2. Increasing global competition
3. More complementary and alternative medicine, nutrition, wellness and other services are more commonly provided by many spas.
4. More synergy between the medical arena, hospitality, and spa services.
5. Greater confusing on the part of consumers/patients about the value propositions and services of MediSpas, hospitals with spas, holistic wellness centers, etc.

We are seeing more synergy and hybrid institutions:

- Hospitals look more like hotels
- Hotels look more like resorts
- Resorts look more like destination spas

What's next?

- Retirement services will combine with hybrid institutions
- Niche markets will emerge for specific areas like sports medicine, diabetes management, etc.
- Different payment systems and methods will emerge, such as all services (including medical) inclusive pricing initiatives, etc.
- A customer base that is increasingly aging and less affluent
- More demand for value added services instead of just dermatologists, nutritionists, spas, etc.
- Even more hybridization of health care institutions, including even restaurants and casinos

Warning: Do not get trapped with ideological differences between resorts, spas, hospitals, holistic wellness centers, and so on, or you will be put out of business by emerging hybrid facilities.



Cynthia Carrion-Norton

People want to live long, happy, and healthy. This is achievable by services and products that improve the state of body, mind, spirit, and the heart.

As a community, the Philippines pays as much attention to preventative medicine as caring for sick people. There is extensive collaboration between full hospital care centers, specialty clinics, wellness and spa centers, and retirement/long-term care clinics. They all work together to create a wellness lifestyle for the nation and visitors from abroad.

The Philippines government is constantly supporting this movement by issuing various acts and subsidizing the industry costs.



The Global Spa Summit is an international organization that brings together leaders and visionaries to positively impact and shape the future of the global spa and wellness industry.