

# MEDICAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT TRENDS IN THE WORLD AND UZBEKISTAN

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**Abstract:** *the article discusses the key factors that allow Uzbekistan to take a strong position in the international market of medical services, competing in the world community. The global trends in the development of tourism services and the possibilities of Uzbekistan to integrate into upward trends are being studied. The advantages of the natural potential of the country, the success of the medical industry in the implementation of state programs to attract medical tourists and encourage foreign investment are analyzed. The importance of using the experience of countries with developed medical tourism is emphasized.*

**Keywords:** *medical tourism, natural potential, medical technologies, marketing, insurance.*

## ТЕНДЕНЦИИ РАЗВИТИЯ МЕДИЦИНСКОГО ТУРИЗМА В МИРЕ И УЗБЕКИСТАНЕ Илхомова Г.З.

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**Аннотация:** *в статье рассматриваются ключевые факторы, которые позволяют Узбекистану занять прочные позиции на международном рынке медицинских услуг, конкурируя в мировом сообществе. Изучаются мировые тенденции в области развития туристических услуг и возможности Узбекистана встроиться в восходящие тренды. Анализируются преимущества природного потенциала Узбекистана, успехи медицинской отрасли в реализации государственных программ по привлечению медицинских туристов и поощрению иностранных инвестиций. Подчеркивается важность использования опыта стран с развитым медицинским туризмом.*

**Ключевые слова:** *медицинский туризм, природный потенциал, медицинские технологии, маркетинг, страхование.*

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The natural potential of Uzbekistan in terms of medical tourism is regarded as very high. The variety of natural resources allows the country to compete with global providers of medical and resort services:

- With Austria - in the field of treatment with thermal, chloride-hydrocarbonate and sodium mineral waters flowing in the spurs of the Tien Shan near the capital.
- With Israel and Hungary - for balneo-mud treatment on about. Balykli (Jizzakh region) and in the capital district (sanatorium "Chinabad").
- With Essentuki - according to the quality of "Tashkent" slightly alkaline mineral water.
- With Switzerland - for the purity of the high-mountain air on the slopes of the Turkestan ridge in the Zaamin region.

The more acute is the issue of the development of medical tourism as a strategic sector of the country's economy. The economic realities of Uzbekistan reflect a certain degree of specialization in medical tourism directions [1]. An attractive factor for foreign consumers will be the change in domestic supply and demand towards lower prices for medical services in the field of family planning and plastic surgery. The difference in price will create the conditions for cross-border arbitration of dental services, whose consumers constitute a significant proportion of medical travelers. The introduction of new methods and techniques in the field of ophthalmology at the level of international standards, which are tested by the innovative clinic of Dr. Maksudova, will contribute to the development of medical tourism within the country. Patients who have received a refusal to carry out surgery at their place of residence will no longer have to go to foreign clinics.

Medical tourism covers two sectors:

1. Medical inpatient and outpatient care.
2. Travel service, which includes:
  - visa regime,
  - transport,
  - residence,
  - service [3].

## **Global trends contributing to the development of medical tourism in Uzbekistan**

The most attractive factors for foreign medical tourists can be:

1. advanced medical technology,
2. fast access to medical services,
3. low maintenance costs,
4. high quality medical services and care.

### ***Long-term trends***

In assessing long-term trends in family planning, the United Nations has identified 2 goals that can ensure sustainable development of humankind until 2030 in this direction:

1. Observance of gender equality of women in the field of education and career growth.
2. Promoting family well-being and healthy lifestyles at all ages.

It is known that the popularity of medical tourism services in the field of family planning is ensured by the use of innovative reproductive technologies. The most indicative in this regard is the experience of Turkish infertility specialists, practicing:

- robotic and endoscopic surgery in elimination of gynecological problems,
- diagnosis and treatment of Pap smear abnormalities (ASUS, HSIL, LSIL),
- colposcopy,
- diagnostics of female oncology and its successful treatment.

And the very system of medical tourism in Turkey is considered one of the most advanced in the world. Clinics practice travel planning for medical purposes under one roof. The future patient sends the results of the research to the doctors indicating personal preferences and within 2 days receives:

- Approximate price list;
- A list of hospitals ready to receive it;
- Reserved seats for roundtrip flights.

The opening of the Turkish Higher Medical School. Ibn Sina in Bukhara, with the support of Istanbul University, will help to reach the level of advanced countries in the qualifications of medical personnel, which will contribute to the reforms being carried out in Uzbekistan, and the entry of the Tashkent Medical Academy into the Association of European Medical Schools will serve to internationalize medical universities in Uzbekistan and improve the quality of educational programs in accordance with advanced international standards.

Medical tourism attracts a wide variety of people. The aging population of countries with high living standards is increasingly in need of expensive treatment and care, but cannot always afford it at home. The first category of elderly medical tourists is represented by the baby boomer generation, numbering more than 220 million people worldwide, born in the post-war period (1946-1964). Elderly consumers are those who need:

- procedures requiring advanced technology,
- access to more frequent care,
- longer care,
- longer recovery time after surgery,
- increased need for hospice and nurturing care at the end of life.

The high cost of such services in the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia and New Zealand is explained by the fact that caring for the elderly is labor intensive and requires special individual attention [5]. Lower labor costs in Uzbekistan will help attract medical tourists of this age category, as it will make personalized services more affordable. In addition, overseas hospice care can become a popular alternative for older residents in highly developed countries.

In Uzbekistan, medical tourism marketing aimed at foreign retirees should be expanded to cover the second category - the "young" generation of retirement age, which:

- more accessible for attraction through online marketing,
- is of great interest to the organizers of medical tourism,
- expands the client base of plastic surgery centers - a promising area of medical tourism in terms of attraction factors [2].

### **Factors of influence on medical tourism**

On a macroeconomic scale, the level of attractiveness of countries positioning themselves in the global medical services market is regulated by the following factors:

1. Demography.
2. Economic trends.
3. Technological changes.
4. Globalization of the tourism industry.
5. Geopolitical trends.

### ***Demography***

If the birth rate remains constant in each country at the level of the first decade of the 21st century, population growth will increase:

- demand for healthcare,
- the pressure on the resources that go into the health care system.

The factors of personnel outflow from health care in highly developed countries are the retirement of doctors and the increase in the cost of doing practice, which slows down access to medical services within the country and stimulates the interest of patients in offers on the international market.

#### ***Economic trends***

• Economic growth in developing countries is driving the outflow of medical tourists to countries with less efficient economies.

• Many consumers do not pay out of pocket using insurance coverage for medical services received abroad. Pilot health insurance programs in developed countries cover the costs of medical care abroad in order to: reduce your own expenses, reduce the costs of their clients (public and private).

• Placement of investment capital in emerging economies becomes effective because: the cost of the project in less developed countries is always lower; fast return on investment is ensured by the high rates of development of the medical services market.

#### ***Technological changes***

The internet has made it easier for consumers to:

- search and access to services around the world,
- the opportunity to share your experience with others,
- coordination of travel and accommodation.

Medical tourism websites specialize in providing comprehensive services to potential clients. The development of medical technologies contributes to the early detection of the disease, the possibilities of telemedicine in postoperative treatment support are expanding. Medical procedures become less invasive and reduce discomfort during recovery. Patients are more likely to consider traveling for inexpensive medical care and are more likely to engage in outdoor activities.

#### ***The globalization of the tourism industry contributes to:***

- full exchange of information,
- lower travel costs due to competition from a limited number of companies in the air transportation market.

#### ***Geopolitical trends***

The medical tourism market has been heavily influenced by cross-border imbalances:

• Wealthy people from underdeveloped and developing countries travel to developed countries to receive better quality assistance.

• People from developed countries can come to Uzbekistan for more affordable medical care.

• People from developing countries - to get in our country: better quality medical services, specialized care.

• Medical tourists from underdeveloped countries, due to the lack of health resources in their home country, may become potential consumers of medical tourism services in Uzbekistan.

On a microeconomic scale, economic policy in the field of tourism is influenced by local, regional and national factors:

- consumer demand,
- cost factors,
- health policy.

The synchronization of three independent goals of the national strategy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the context of "economy-medicine-tourism" was demonstrated by the Order of the Ministry of Health dated January 9, 2019 No. 5, which provided for a radical improvement in the activities of the Main Directorate for the Development of Tourism and the Health System to promote medical services in the international market [4]. The Department for the Development of Medical Tourism was established, designed to regularly monitor consumer demand and control the quality of education, clinical training, and the speed of implementation of advanced technologies in the field of medicine.

The experience of the nearest countries with developed medical tourism will be useful here: South Korea and Turkey. The international coordinator system introduced in South Korea made it possible to combine the provision of medical services with flexible logistics of medical travel:

- scheduling medical tours,
- medical escort of tourists all the way from their home country to a Korean clinic,
- support at discharge until the patient returns home.

Considering the risks that hinder the decision-making on medical travel, the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan:

- introduced a new category of Medical Visa for foreign tourists,
- provided citizens of 76 countries with the possibility of obtaining an electronic entry visa,
- introduced a visa-free regime for 65 countries.

Other risks to medical tourists in foreign countries include:

- Financial (price / quality).
- The likelihood of political unrest.
- Language and cultural barriers.
- Infectious.
- Postoperative.

Postoperative risks began to decline with the advent of telemedicine. The minimization of financial risks was influenced by the launch in August 2019 of the official website of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Uzbekistan, developed at the Center for Information and Communication Technologies with the participation of medical institutions. The awareness of medical tourists is an important motivating factor. As the database is updated with information on centers and hospitals, the speed of decision-making related to the choice of country for treatment will increase. Public and private clinics will be able to post the following information on the site:

- offered products,
- popular high-tech services,
- their cost,
- health care options,
- the level of qualifications of doctors and staff,
- quality of care,
- staff proficiency in English,
- results of international accreditations of hospitals and laboratories.

Advertising should contain messages about the potential benefits of medical services in Uzbekistan, with an emphasis on their quality and safety. Joining international conventions will increase the international authority of medical institutions. Statistical data on foreign tourists visiting Uzbekistan for medical purposes will increase awareness of insurance companies, as well as stimulate foreign direct investment in medical tourism.

#### **Findings**

Developed country governments and health ministries are beginning to look for ways to reduce the cost and budgetary burden of health care - an ideal time for providers of less expensive medical tourism. From the above, we want to draw several conclusions:

- The Ministry of Economy needs to more often place tenders for the supply of high-tech medical equipment to Uzbekistan.
- The medical tourism development map should plan to introduce an international system of medical travel coordinators, as is the practice in South Korea.
- Healthcare providers and destination marketers need to focus on the most profitable market segments and effectively develop customer service in priority areas.
- There is huge potential for the development of medical tourism in the countries on the Silk Road, which allows insurance companies to focus their efforts in this direction.

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