



MEDICAL TOURISM IN MIRAJ CITY: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract:

Tourism has vast potential to bring about changes in the economic, environmental societal and culture things in country, which helps to improve economic condition of any region. Recently Medical tourism is growing sector in tourism and India has huge potential in Medical sector. Medical tourism is act of traveling to other places to obtain medical dental and surgical care. Medical Tourism in Miraj city has been growing at a faster pace & many private hospitals are doing their best to exploit this opportunity This research paper mainly based on to study the opportunities and challenges faced by patients with respect to medical tourism in Miraj city .

Keywords: Medical Tourism, Surgery, Treatment, Accessibility

Introduction:

Recently, tourism in medical sector also known as Medical Tourism has growing rapidly in Asians countries like India. Thailand, Singapore and India are the three countries that receive maximum medical tourists owing to low cost of treatment therefore patients has chose to those countries as medical tourism destination.

“Medical tourism or Medical travel is the act of traveling to other countries to obtain medical, dental and surgical care” (Dr.Vinita K Pimpale)

Miraj which is situated southern part of Maharashtra become a medical hub in past 20 to 30 years and its provided numbers of medical treatments and services, Which attracts patients towards this destination. Many people from the adjoining places come to Miraj for the rejuvenation promised by various medical services. There are also more patients coming from other countries such as Bangladesh, Shrilanka and U.A.E. where treatment may not be available. Miraj offers a nice blend of top-class medical expertise at attractive prices thus helping a growing number of corporate hospitals. There are one Government (civil) hospital and medical college. The private hospitals Pathology laboratory and Radiology centers this number goes high which is 289 (IMA MIRAJ). Private hospitals and 3 medical colleges these overburdened health infrastructure, which creating huge opportunities in Miraj medical tourism market.

Review of literature:

Connell (2006)¹ describes medical tourism as a popular mass culture where people travel to overseas countries to obtain healthcare services and facilities such as medical, dental and surgical care, whilst having the opportunity to visit tourist spots of that country

Dr. Suman Kumar Dawn (2011)²

observed that, India is promoting medical tourism aggressively. The key competitive advantages of India in medical tourism is that low cost of treatments , strong reputation in the advanced healthcare segment (cardiovascular surgery, organ transplants, eye surgery etc.) and the diversity of tourist destinations available in the country. The key concerns facing the industry include: absence of government initiative, lack of a coordinated effort to promote the industry, no accreditation mechanism for hospitals and the lack of uniform pricing policies and standards across hospitals.

A study by Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management (2011)³ stated that the development of medical tourism based on quality of treatment- which includes expected quality of animate and inanimate resources and procedures; connectivity- which refers to ease of physical movement between home country and destination; cost of treatment- which includes costs of other expenses besides the direct cost of medical procedure; ease of access- which relates to expediency with which medical treatment can be accessed; and, ease of purchase- other factors that facilitate purchase like insurance, terms of payment, and help to finalize the travel itinerary.

Neil Lunt (2011)⁴ opined that, the shift towards patients from richer, more developed nations travelling to less developed countries to access health services, largely driven by the low-cost treatments and helped by cheap flights and internet sources of information.

Objectives:

1. To examines the factors influencing the choice of Miraj city as a medical tourism destination.

2. To examines the issues faced by patients with respect to medical tourism in Miraj city.

Data source and Methodology:

To fulfill the aim of above objectives the data was collected through primary and secondary sources, for primary data we use the source of Questionnaire and Personal Interviews. Secondary data has been collected with the help of Books, Magazines, Newspapers, Research Articles, Research Journals, E-Journals, Report of Ministry of Tourism, and the website www.health-tourism-india.com etc.

Research methodology is partly descriptive, partly exploratory and partly analytical. Primary data collected through random sampling method, taking 70 Patients have undergone treatment under the various hospitals in Miraj city. Data collected was cleaned transformed and analyzed with statistical methods e.g. percentage, average, mean respectively. Results presented by bar graph, divided circle using various methods and techniques for simplifying the data.

Study Region:

The region under the study is the Miraj city, situated in the southern part of Maharashtra state. It lies between on the geographical coordinates of 16° 48' 30"N to 16° 49' 30"N. and 74° 38'30"E and 74° 39' 30"E (fig. 01). The city occupies a total area of 91 sq. kms, and population of Miraj city is 502,793 persons as per census 2011 (Figure: 1).

Treatment taken by patients:

The treatment can contain a full scope of medical tourism. It is necessary to clearly define the Status, Growth and Impact of Medical Tourism which health treatment includes how it is medically treated and what kind of tourist services is included i.e. Oncology, Spine surgery, Cardiac surgery, Gynecology etc (Table: 1) (Figure: 2).

Study shows that maximum patients are taken cardiac treatment which is 23% as follows Gynecology 20%, Oncology 16% because of they are not afford to go metro cities like Pune, Mumbai etc. to take such high cost treatment so they chose this destination.

Agglomeration of Hospitals:

In Miraj city due to favorable geographical condition and other medical

services e.g. climate, accessible location, Hospitals, Drug farm and Labs are more aggregated in this location. There are different specialist hospitals practices such as Cardiologist, Neurologist, Gynecologist, Orthopedic Surgeon, Psychiatrist, Otolaryngologist etc. such type of situation gives economic benefits to hospitals as well as patients (Table: 2).

Source of information about hospitals in case of patients:

Various sources have made available all information related to hospitals available and treatment offered all over the world and people can select their destination based on the information and facilities offered. Sources are depending on the how close they are to the source of information.

The study shows that, most of respondents have informed by mouth from other patients 40%, follows mouth from other doctors 22.85%, advertisement 22.85%. Table 3 indicates that lack of patients getting information through internet marketing and other sources (Figure: 3)

Reasons for patients coming to Miraj City:

Most of the patients are chose medical destination which provides good medical facilities, accessibility of location, low cost of treatment and other domestic factors. Miraj has fulfilled these most of amenities (Table: 4).

The study shows that maximum patients are chose this destination because of accessibility of this destination as follows low cost of medical treatment, treatment facilities, adjoins medical facilities attracts patients to this medical destination. As well as other factors like language, mostly kannada speaking staff attract patients from Karnataka (Figure: 4).

Issues faced by patients:

There are numerous benefits and opportunities provided to patients by medical tourism. But several problems are faced by patients. e.g. Environmental factors, bad infrastructure internal traveling etc. that highly effect on medical tourism (Table: 5).

Table indicate that, mostly bad infrastructure, internal traveling issues faced by patients follows unhygienic condition, lack of safety and environmental factors also effect on patients (Figure: 5).

Table No. 01 Treatment taken by patients:

Treatment	No. of Patients	Percentage
Oncology	11	15.71
Spine surgery	07	10.00
Cardiac surgery	16	22.85
Eye surgery	09	12.85
Knee replacement	05	7.14
Gynecology	14	20.00
Other	08	11.42
Total	70	100

Source: Compiled by researcher

Table 2: Specialist Doctors in Miraj City (Table: 3).

Sr. No.	Specialization	No. of Doctors (Govt. Hospitals)	No. of Doctors (Private Hospitals)
1	Neurologist	-	03
2	Physician	05	30
3	Orthopedic	03	16
4	Pediatric	03	15
6	Gynecologist	04	20
7	ENT	02	10
8	Psychiatrist	03	04
9	Ophthalmologist	02	05
10	Dermatologist	02	05

Source: Compiled on IMA Miraj Website

Table. 03 Source of information

Sr. No.	Source	No. Respondents	Percentage
1	From other patient	28	40
2	From other doctors	18	25.71
3	Advertisement	16	22.85
4	Direct marketing	2	2.85
5	Internet	1	1.42
6	Other	5	7.14
7	Total	70	100

Source: Compiled by researcher

Table. 04: Reasons for patients

Sr. No.	Reasons	No. of respondents
1	low cost	17
2	Qualified doctors	16
3	Ease of appointment	8
4	Treatment facilities	20
5	Accessibility	25
6	Adjoins medical facilities	18
7	other	12
8	total	116

Source: Compiled by researcher

Table .05

Sr. No.	Problems	No. of Respondents
1	Environmental factors	14
2	Bad Infrastructure	26
3	Unhygienic condition	20
4	Follow up treatment	18
5	Internal traveling	22
6	Safety	19
7	Total	119

Source: Compiled by researcher

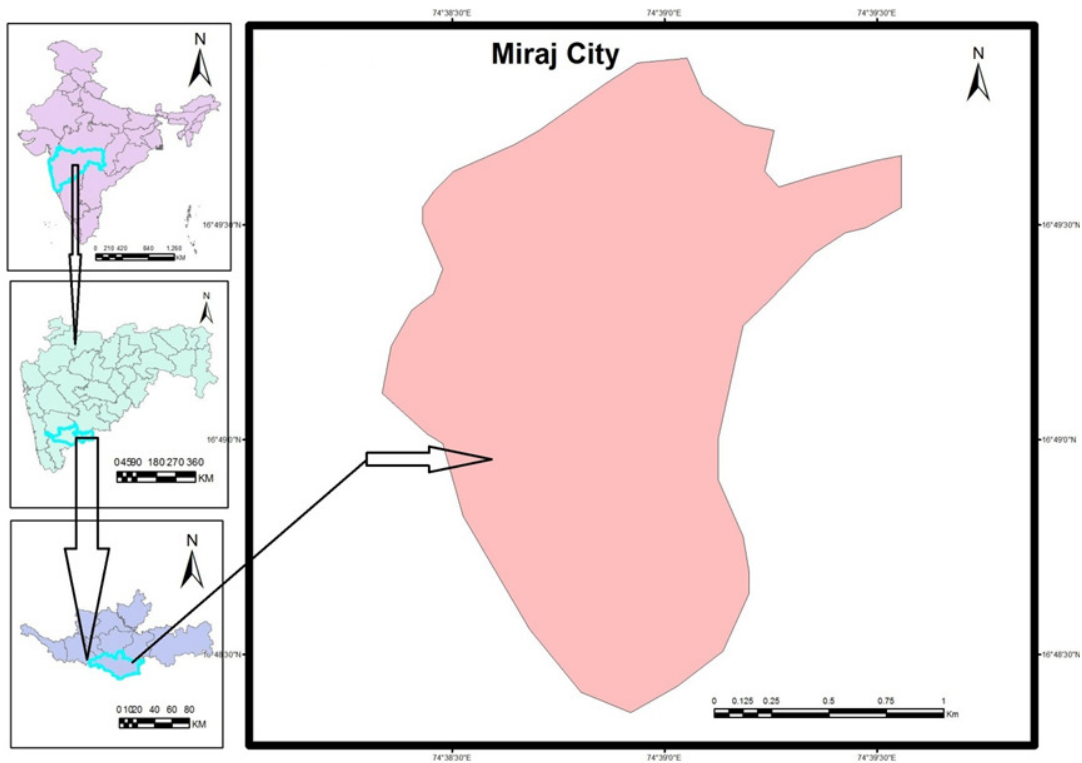


Figure 1: LOCATION MAP

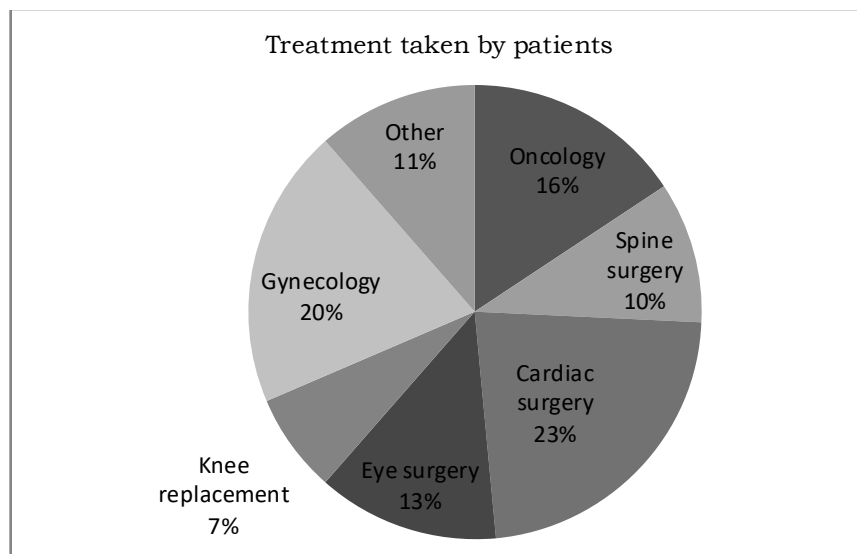


Figure 02

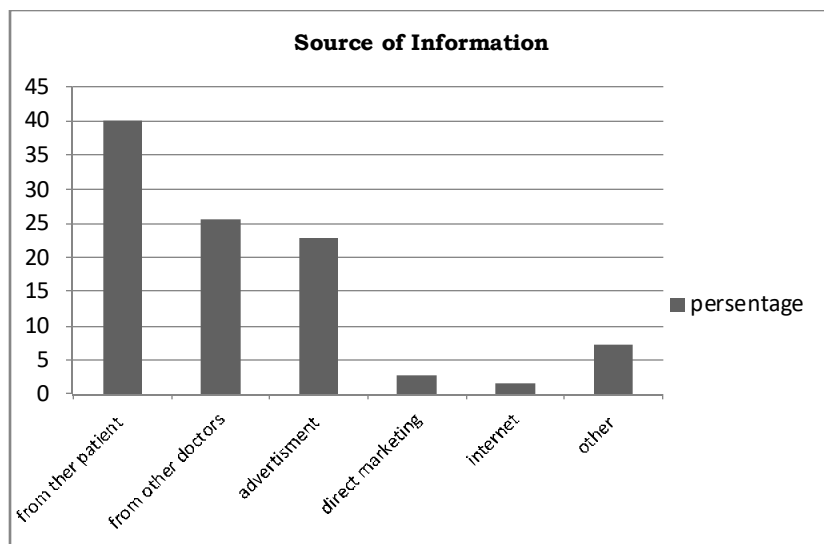


Figure 03

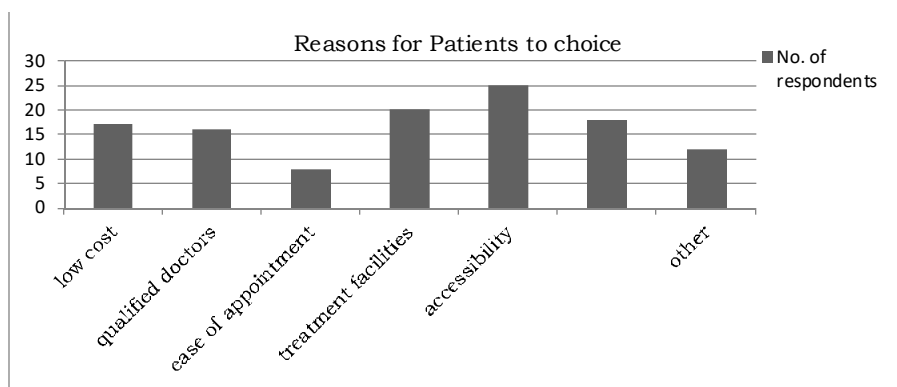
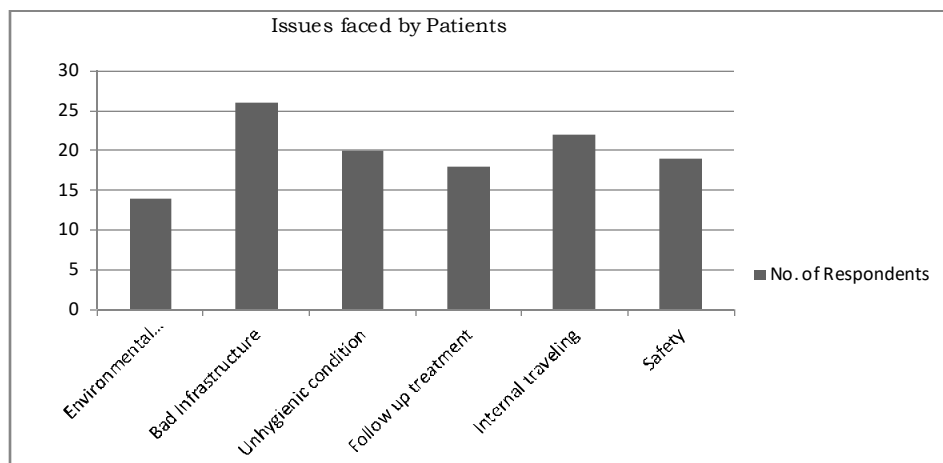


Figure 04



Conclusion and Suggestions:

This study reveals that Miraj is high potential to feed medical necessities of patients. Accessibility and low cost of treatment are highly attracting patients to Miraj. Agglomeration of various

specialty hospitals practices number of special treatment like cardiac surgery, oncology, and gynecology related treatments fulfill the standard treatment of the patients. The results of this research study provide insights into the

various challenges faced by the medical tourism in Miraj City.

Even though there are numerous benefits and opportunities provided by medical tourism, potential medical tourists who are looking forward to profit from these benefits, should also be aware of the challenges. There are bad infrastructure, internal traveling as well as unhygienic condition and environmental factors highly affect on patients. Lack of information about this destination through internet and direct marketing is lower than expected that's why people are unknown about this destination. The biggest challenge is to position India as a favorable healthcare destination by setting high health standards and work in association with the government and the medical council to see to it that all hospitals keep up to those standards.

1. Hospitals in Miraj City should provide good infrastructure equipped with latest technology. Besides this, government should take initiative in putting proper civic infrastructure in place like internal traveling; good roads etc and provide safety to tourist (patients and their relatives)

2. To promote medical tourism in Miraj City, Hospitals, local Government body, Medical council should come together and effectively apply various ways like Marketing, reduced problems faced by patients

3. Hospitals in Miraj City should tie up with more and more adjoining medical facilities provider centers like labs Pharmacist Company to minimize the problems like hidden cost

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