

Medical Tourism: The Critical Role between Taiwan and Mainland China

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Abstract

Recent evidence showed that the International Medical Tourism conference held in Shanghai reported there are 12million outbound medical tourists each year in the whole world, which increased about 15% to 25% per year. Databases were systematically searched between 2010 and 2012 and 60 papers were selected for review. (Fig.1, Fig.2). About 50-60 thousand Chinese go oversea for medical treatment not including the health examination and plastic surgery. Moreover, the target Asia countries are India and Thailand because they provide more cheaper medical services. There are lots of Chinese individuals came to Taiwan searching medical evaluation and therapy about that time. However, due to the political policy changed that the Chinese people are prohibited to come to Taiwan individually, therefore, the medical tourism were marked reduced. In the meantime, China tries to develop inbound and outbound medical tourism themselves and providing more cheaper and quality medical treatment and health examination.

Key words: Medical tourism, benefits, risks, Political policy, Taiwan, China

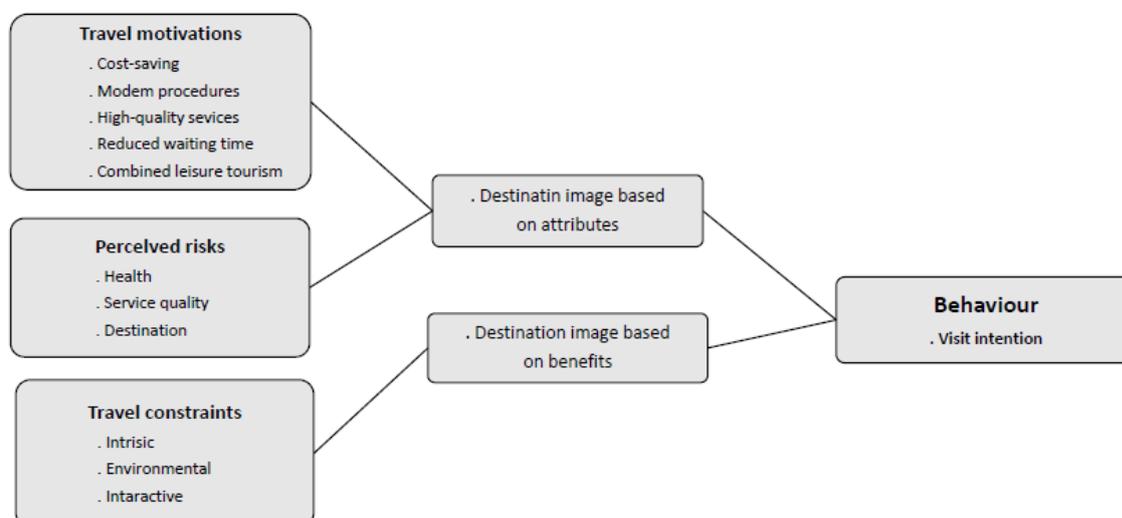


Figure1: Theoretical model of medical tourism decision-making. Note the unidirectional arrows which indicate the complexity of the relationships between the factors in the model.

Cited from Sultan Qaboos University Med Journal. 2017: Vol.17, Iss 1.

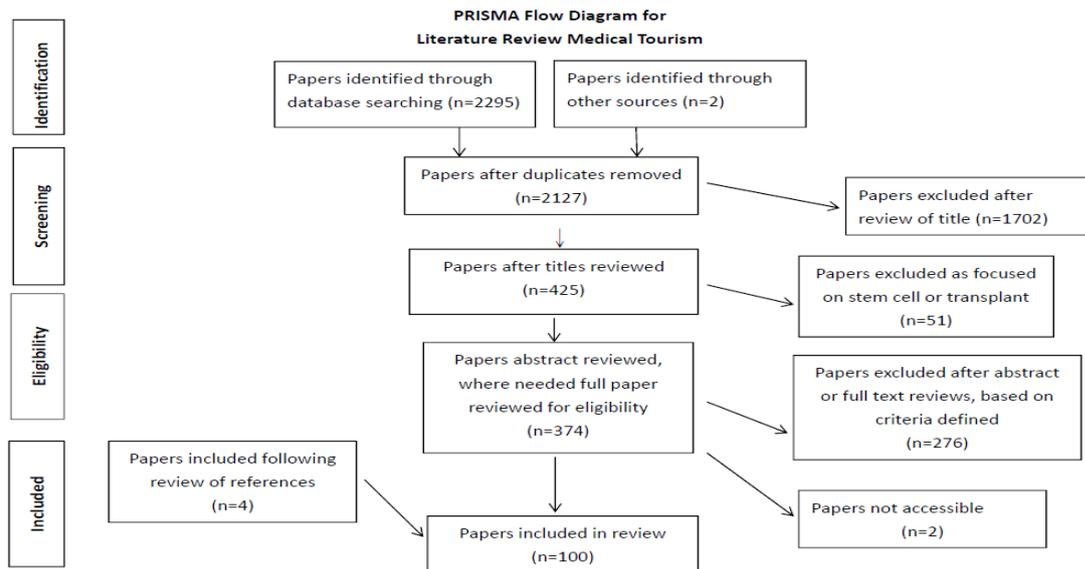


Figure 2 PRISMA flow diagram for literature review medical tourism.
Cited from the Journal of Travel Medicine: 2014, Vol.21, Iss 6.

Introduction

Paul Krugman, winner of the 2008 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences, has highly praised Taiwan's NHI system.¹ He implies that Taiwan, being one of the Asian countries with renowned medical care, has the potential to be a successful Medical Tourism (MT) destination, and NHI system makes it more likely for Taiwan to successfully develop MT service.² Moreover, the Government of Taiwan internationalized the health care industry. This strategy not only expanded the market size of Taiwan's health care industry, but also booster its presence worldwide. The accreditation of 13 Taiwanese hospitals by the Joint Commission International demonstrates that their medical quality has reached international standards, enabling the country to complete in global health care business and promote Taiwan's excellent medical techniques. Foreigners who arrive at the international health care industry park have access to high-quality health care services while also enjoying the country's famous natural spots and historical sites. We believe that MT will help boost Taiwan's economy.

Recent trends document growth in MT, the private pursuit of medical interventions abroad.³ Medical Tourism is an old phenomenon which has seen a rapid increase due to global technological advance, thus enabling people to receive treatment

anywhere in the world, often combined with topical vacation, treatments of a non-acute, voluntary nature and are driven largely by high price and long waiting lists at the home countries and low prices and high service quality at the destination country.⁴ In Taiwan, MT is a new strategies for health care industry² The quality of service for medical tourism in Taiwan including the capability of the service provider to provide committed MT services reliably and accurately, facility service providers in conjunction with the services provided, the cordial and polite attitude of the service provider eliciting a sense of trust from the customer, the professional ability of medical personnel in hospital and reliability of service provider were mostly improved⁵ The above 4 points are needed to continue and maintain in the MT processing process. However, it should also focus on the importance of cost-effectiveness.⁶ It is because the provision of MT varies and the research is required on volume, cost, patient motivation, industry and on long term health outcomes in MT.⁷ Under by the increase and overgrowth in MT, the Government's role in regulation of the MT should focus on the patient safety, economic growth and health equity can be protected, which including the government should regulate MT thought there was disagreement as the which government sector should do so and how the government has not at the time regulated the MT sector nor show great interest in

doing so; and international accreditation could be used to augment domestic regulation.⁸ Also, estimating volume of MT and cost and benefit is also the important key point.⁹ Moreover, the potential benefit of travelling across national borders to obtain medical treatment include improved care, decrease costs and reduced waiting times but medical travel involves additional risk, compared to obtaining treatment domestically.

In conclusion, the successful route of established MT is determined by the political policy between the two countries and not the benefit and expansion technological methods.

The Essential Role of Inbound Medical Tourism

Inbound Medical Tourism is described as patients from inbound traveling to your country receives medical care, outbound MT is the opposite of inbound, it is described as patients from your own country traveling to other countries to receive medical care.

The clinical and epidemiological feature cases facilitate timely recognition and diagnosis of influenza in febrile inbound passengers and therefore help prevent domestic transmission of influenza virus. However, there is little empirical research on the virus of inbound MT, and due to confidentiality and privacy policy, many hospitals declined interviews with foreign patients.¹⁰ There are shared factors shaping the development of MT in Asia countries that help explain why it is being pursued by my hospitals and governments in the region. Development of the sector is primarily being driven by public investment promotion agencies and the private health sector seeking economic benefits with limited consideration and planning for the health equity concerns MT raises.¹¹

The Essential Role of Outbound Medical Tourism

The outbound MT is described as patients from your own country traveling to another countries to receive medical care, but the ongoing economic and political crises or political policy has resulted in a collapse of the health care system and re-

emergence of previously controlled or eliminated infectious diseases.¹² Residents of low-to middle income counties with strained or inadequate health system have traveled to other countries in order to access procedures not available in their home countries and to take advantage of higher quality care elsewhere. In Mongolia, for example, residents are traveling to China, Japan, Thailand and other Asia countries.¹³ Also we must mentioned that the great amount Chinese residents traveled to Taiwan for medical care before the Chinese prohibit policy started about two years ago.

Discussion

Medical tourism, which involves cross-border travel to access private, non-emergency medical interventions is growing in many Latin American and Asia countries. In 2010, the Government of Taiwan internationalized the health care industry. This strategy not only expanded the market size of Taiwan's health care industry, but also booster its presence worldwide. To assist the health care industry to expand its market size, two important phases of official strategies need to be established, which include promote the quality and quantity of MT. Moreover, the accreditation of 13 Taiwanese hospitals by the Joint Commission International demonstrates that out medical quality has reached international standards, enabling the county to complete in global health care business. Therefore, the officials are going to promote Taiwan's excellent medical techniques, including techniques for craniofacial surgery, living donor liver transplantation, total joint arthroplasty cardiovascular disease treatment, minimal access surgery, and assisted reproduction. Foreigners, especially, the mainland China populations, who arrive at the international health care industry park have access to high-quality health care services while also enjoying the country's famous natural spots and historical sites. Thus, the MT helps boost Taiwan's economy since that time. However, the issues of trust and distrust emerged in ways that ultimately complicate the physician-patient relationship. Also, the participants wanted to support patients' decision-making about MT, but there were limits to and limitations on the support, and while participants expressed a desire to

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support patient's decision-making about MT and to trust in their decision, they also desired to be distanced from the decision itself but not the patient. Also, significant tension exists between participant's roles as agents of the patient and their roles as agents of Taiwan's public health care system.

In conclusion, MT has seen a rapid increase due to global technological advance and enabling people to receive treatment of a non-acute voluntary nature and driven largely by high price and long waiting lists at the home countries and low price and high service quality at the destination country, which improving the health care system. However, these benefits could not defeat the political policy between two countries, for example between mainland China and Taiwan.

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