PROSPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT OF INBOUND MEDICAL TOURISM IN UZBEKISTAN

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ABSTRACT
The growth rate of the global medical tourism sector is currently considered to be one of the highest compared to other tourist segments. More than 60 countries declare the development of medical tourism at the level of public policy. Medical tourism has spawned a new concept of modern health care. In Uzbekistan, the process of developing a strategy for the development of inbound medical tourism has begun. The rich and unique nature of Uzbekistan is a source of development in our country of such popular and demanded all over the world types of tourism as medical and ecological. There is no such trend in Uzbekistan, but the attention of the legislative bodies to the development of medical tourism gives hope for the active development of the health care system of our country with all the attendant positive consequences. In this article we will consider the prospects of medical tourism in Uzbekistan.

KEYWORDS: Tourism policy, Medical-Health tourism, Inbound Tourism, Social Organizations, Healthcare, Medical Equipment, Travel Insurance.

Introduction
Tourism is an active form of social communication, contributing to the development of mutual understanding between peoples and the establishment of cultural and economic ties, as well as the development of cooperation among the states and, in general, the improvement of the international situation. International tourism relations are one of the important social forms of international relations and have an active influence on the politics of the countries of the world.

Tourism plays an active role in the daily lives of millions of people, for some it is an entrepreneurial activity, for some it is social and domestic leisure and, as a result, it contributes to the economic and social development of society. Tourism further enriches the thoughts and fantasies that are formed from a variety of experiences, affects the mental state of people and creates the basis for the continuation of their active work.

In Uzbekistan, the prospects of tourism development are constantly expanding; large-scale projects are being implemented in various directions. In particular, in recent years, such a new tourist destination as medical tourism has become popular.

Medical tourism is the receipt of medical services outside the country of residence, combining leisure and treatment abroad is a business sector based on the significant difference in prices for medical services in the countries [1]. This type of tourism is mainly associated with the treatment of simple and uncomplicated diseases, with the passage of a general
medical examination and obtaining medical advice. All this brings significant economic benefits to medical tourism practitioners [2]. One of the rapidly emerging manifestations of the global commercialization of health care is medical tourism (also frequently referred to as health tourism or medical travel) [3].

Medical tourism has grown significantly over the past decade, and international healthcare has become a global industry. The factors contributing to the expansion of this industry are related to the problems of providing medical services in countries of origin, which are mainly associated with high costs of medical services, consumers of low-income medical services, long waiting times and poor quality of medical services [4].

The growth of medical tourism can not only keep skilled medical personals in the host country, but can also have a positive impact on the economy as it transforms from previously untraded medical services to foreign consumers [5].

Health tourism provides for the movement of residents and non-residents within the state borders and beyond the state borders for a period of not less than 20 hours and not more than 6 months for health purposes, for the prevention of various diseases of the human body [6].

There are four main motivating factors of medical tourism: low cost of services, advanced technologies, high qualification of doctors and the time factor (long waiting for treatment in their country). It is well known that there are two types of medical tourism: outbound and inbound [7]. Outbound medical tourism is when citizens of a country travel abroad in search of treatment. Accordingly inbound medical tourism involves the arrival of foreign citizens in the country for treatment and recreation.

The formation of medical tourism as a budget-forming sector of the national economy with a consistent increase in its contribution to the gross domestic product of the country is defined as the strategic goal of introducing an innovative model of healthcare management in the Republic of Uzbekistan [8].

**Main part: The role of social organizations in the development of inbound medical tourism**

In the country, a concept for the development of medical tourism is being developed, which includes mechanisms of legal regulation, the creation of modern medical complexes with appropriate infrastructure, a simplified procedure for the entry and exit of patients with organizational and advisory support during their stay in the country [9]. This concept is based, among other things, on the proposals of public organizations for the further development of medical tourism, the creation of favorable conditions for foreign citizens to enter the Republic to receive medical services [10].

The Committee on health protection of citizens of the Legislative chamber of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the activities of Parliamentary factions play a significant role in strengthening the regulatory framework of the sphere under consideration. Specialists of private medical institutions participating in the Committee’s activities make proposals to attract investments and highly qualified specialists from abroad, expand the allocation of preferential loans to provide private medical institutions with modern medical equipment, developing medical tourism and export of medical services.

Today, the issues of medical tourism in Uzbekistan are entrusted to a specially created Department under the Ministry of health of the Republic, the Public Council acting under the Ministry. It is entrusted with a number of tasks, including: collecting information about foreign medical institutions abroad, recommended to our citizens; wide informing the population about the possibilities of domestic specialized medical institutions; providing advice to patients in choosing domestic clinics for the profile of the disease; collection and generalization of statistical data on the volume of paid medical services provided to non-residents by domestic medical centers, and others.

Uzbekistan has a certain experience of holding international exhibitions and "round tables" on the subject under consideration and attracting public organizations to them. Thus, the sections "Medical and health tourism", which presents the unique potential of domestic medicine, its scientific achievements, specialized medical centers, the possibility of modern diagnostics and treatment, created in leading clinics [11], are available at the annual Tashkent international tourism fair "Tourism on the Silk road".

Section of medical tourism, where the leading clinics of our country and abroad demonstrate their success in the field of diagnosis, treatment of diseases and rehabilitation is available at the annual international specialized medical exhibition “UzMedExpo”[12].

At the international exhibitions "Здравоохранение — ТИНЕ", "Фармацевтическая индустрия — Артека Экспо Центральная Азия" и "Стоматология — Стоматология Узбекистана" the latest achievements of domestic and world health systems are demonstrated. This contributes to the further development of pharmaceuticals, dentistry, medical tourism, the expansion of international cooperation in these areas, as well as the study of proposals and requirements, the attraction of foreign investment in our country, the development and implementation of promising joint projects with foreign partners.

An international “round table” was held in Jizzakh, devoted to pressing issues of the development of sanatorium-resort recreation and medical tourism. It was attended by specialists from medical, health centers and organizations for the development of medical tourism in Uzbekistan, South Korea, and Germany [13]. The Termez hosted the «Open South» international business forum on the investment, export and tourism potential of the Surkhandarya region[14].

Certain work in this direction is being carried out by the whole spectrum of domestic public organizations. For example, a group of representatives of the Republican Council of Young Scientists at the Youth Union of Uzbekistan conducted a research expedition in the village of Langar, Chirakchi district,
Kashkadarya region. As a result of the expedition, the researchers put forward proposals for the development of ecological and medical tourism, making the studied territories in the state list of protected objects [15].

The scale and needs of medical tourism can be judged by the presence of world medical tourism Associations. Currently, there are such associations as the European Medical Tourism Alliance, the International Medical Tourism Association, the International Travel Support Association, the American Travel Insurance Association, the Travel Insurance Intermediaries Association, the World Health Integration Council, and the Medical Tourism Association Israel. The main goal of medical associations is to create a sustainable organization of medical tourism and the creation of a large comprehensive information base in medical tourism [16].

The experience of other countries confirms that the active promotion of medical tourism technologies requires the creation of pilot regions-destinations that could form the necessary mechanisms and technologies for the application of their results in other regions [17].

Recently, in Uzbekistan, the health tourism market is undergoing changes. The traditional health resorts and cease to be a place of treatment and relaxation for people of advanced age will be established by semi-functional health centers, designed for a wide range of consumers.

In Samarkand region, in order to create new routes, develop modern types of tourism, a number of objects of ecological, agricultural and sports tourism are included in the tour program of the region. Charter flights are organized for tourists from Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia and other countries to visit the ancient city. More than 270 private medical centers of the region are actively involved in the development of medical tourism. These clinics, equipped with modern medical equipment and staffed by highly qualified specialists, not only provide quality medical services to tourists visiting to our country, but also conduct effective work to expand the scope of medical tourism [18].

Kim Sun Hak, Deputy Director of Samsung-madison (Republic of Korea): "The peculiarity of nature, the diversity of landscapes, flora and fauna of the Zomin mountain sanatorium are of great interest to foreign tourists. Experts note that in the sanatorium "Zomin" effectively cured diseases of the throat, respiratory tract and nervous system. The nature of Uzbekistan is rich and unique. There are great opportunities for the development of medical tourism. The main thing is that government support for this work expands its prospects."[19]

Medical tourism in general has a negligible impact on the health care system. At the same time, according to experts, medical tourism countries need to overcome the shortage of medical personnel, the risks of attracting workers from medical institutions in the public and private sectors to hospitals serving foreigners. Otherwise, there may be a situation of significant cost increases in private hospitals and, apparently, budget costs. In addition, a possible “brain drain” may lead to a decrease in the level of training of medical personnel. The income accumulated as a result of medical tourism is initially proposed to be used to organize advanced professional training of doctors and stabilize the staff of teachers of medical schools [20].

**Conclusion**

Medical tourism for the CIS countries is a relatively new direction in tourism activities. At the same time, this sphere in these countries is rather poorly institutionalized, integrates two directions at once "tourism" and "medicine", and the existing normative-legal acts do not yet fully reflect the specifics of this activity. There is a very strong disunity, and sometimes misunderstanding between representatives of the "travel business" and the "medical professional community".

An assessment of the development trends of domestic inbound medical tourism shows that it is necessary to pay even more attention to the quality of the medical services provided the related infrastructure and marketing of the development of medical tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan [21].

Medical tourism in the country is just beginning to emerge as a target area and a component of state policy. Citizens of neighboring countries have always come to clinics in Uzbekistan for treatment and counseling. However, they arrived independently, directly to institutions, without contacting specialized travel agencies and specially created departments for the development of medical tourism. The high quality of the services provided and affordable prices have attracted and will continue to attract foreign citizens to Uzbekistan, therefore medical tourism has great prospects. Indeed, the development of inbound medical tourism is not only an additional income for the economy, but also the image of the country.

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