

Taiwan gains global recognition for its competitive and cost-effective medical services

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Taiwan has emerged as a hotspot for medical tourism with sophisticated medical technology, well-trained medical professionals, strategic geographical location, stress-free VISA process and most importantly affordable cost-effective quality treatment



Globalization has always been advantageous to access cross-border medical care resources. The total market value of global medical travel is worth around US\$ 20-35 billion. The 2015 market research and analysis by Transparency Market Research (TMR), estimated a rise in the scale of the global medical tourism to US\$10 billion worth to 30 billion by 2019. From 2013 to 2019 the compound growth rate of the global medical travel market has been 17.9% per year.

Taiwan depicts exponential healthcare development supported by its refined and pioneering precision healthcare tech service, advanced digital medical solution and innovative biomaterials.

Taiwan has an effective business model for medical tourism which include value-added chain procedures of service stages, planning stage, promotion/marketing stage, coordinating stage, pre-hospitalization stage, follow up care stage and health insurance cost claims stage.

A golden ration of Taiwan health system renders 70% of private hospitals and 30% government hospitals. An increased number in private hospital is favourable towards maximum high-quality treatment, which is also economical to patients with the reduced waiting time.

A recent data by MOHW in 2018 indicates the influx of global medical tourist's to Taiwan as follows: South East Asia (37.40%) Mainland China (32.24%), Hong Kong and Macau (4.63%), America (8.29%), North-East Asia (6.90%), Europe (3.41%), Oceania (0.88%), South Asia (0.78%), Africa(0.56%), West Asia (0.10%). There is also a fluctuating population which flows from Egypt, Dubai, Malaysia to meet their medical needs.

The state-of-the-art medical facilities and impressive medical care service models serve as the impetus behind the flourishing Medical tourism in Taiwan. The rapidly growing healthcare demands are upheld by some of the listed

advantages:

- - **Supreme grade medical care in an affordable package**

Taiwan offers excellent medical facilities through its advanced state-of-the-art technologies to provide quality medical care. However, the cost of the treatment will only be around 'one fifth' of what will be incurred in western countries like the US and UK. Taiwan's National Health Insurance program initiated by MOH reduces medical care services cost across Taiwan. This effective model, in turn, creates scope for excellent medical care at affordable charges which attract global medical tourists.

- **Well trained and highly professionals medical team**

The medical care team at every hospital in Taiwan is resourced with highly qualified medical professionals. For healthcare practitioners' it is mandatory to undergo an initial training of 7 years, followed by a specialized training to enter into the treatment zone. Most of the Doctors have undertaken exclusive professional training at globally renowned universities and have updated themselves with competitive technologies.

- **Flexible and tailored treatment plans for individual patient needs**

Taiwan offers a various degree of health solutions from cosmetic treatments to treating fatal ailments like Cancer. Taiwan medical tourism captivates patients by both conventional treatments and traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). Upon the patient's confirmation to avail treatment at a particular hospital, a tailored treatment plan will be designed and shared with the concerned patient.

- **Cutting-edge technology addresses the precision treatment**

Taiwanese hospitals use modern equipment like CTs, PETs, and MRIs for the process of cancer screening, image-guided radiation for cancer treatment, and cyber knives for taking out tumours. Mobile health care monitors offer superior Tele-medical services for a patient on remote consultation. To ensure uninterrupted patient care, the hospitals use a 24-hour health care monitor and surveillance. Hospitals also adopt a smart card system which stores patient's information in a small IC card (Integrated Circuit card). This simplifies the task of storing patient information and also reduces the hassles of paperwork when the patient is shifted from one hospital to the other.

- **Verified and certified Healthcare systems**

Taiwan hospitals are given accreditation by the Taiwan Joint Commission on Medical Accreditation and help in maintaining treatment & service quality standards. The competitive healthcare industry ensures high quality in medical and health care in order to receive higher accreditation. If the accreditation standards are high, then more subsidies will be received for that particular hospital and its concerned facilities.

- **Impeccable international patient services**

International visitors experience all the coordination and comfort needed starting from the help desks, even with translator assistance in more than 20 languages. Majority hospitals have adopted interactive robotic assistance which responds to patients' queries and navigates through the requirements.

- **Prompt customer-oriented services**

The hospitals operate exclusive units for international patient service, communication and care assisted by a team of coordinators. Hospitals also provide the patients with a 'personal health manager' for an effective follow-up through their recovery phase with interesting post-treatment plans.

- **Strategic geographical location**

Taiwan's position in the global map is highly advantageous to Asian country travellers with its short distance and easy Visa procedures. Visitors from countries viz., Canada, US, Australia, and the European Union can visit Taiwan without an official VISA. Medical Tourists can receive a medical visa grant from 30 days to six-month stay abided by the rules.

Taiwan's China Medical University Hospital (CMUH) won two International Medical Travel Journal (IMTJ) awards at Berlin, Germany, on December 3, 2019, in the categories of "Specialist international patient centre" and "Best marketing initiative", drawing international attention to Taiwan's medical excellence.

Dr Shih-Sheng Chang, Chief Secretary, China Medical University Hospital, Taichung, says, "One of the most important features of Taiwan medical care is its easy access to affordable and high-quality medical care. It is the Health Insurance Bureau's sole responsibility to provide medical benefits as well as quality control. Regardless of visiting public or private hospital, the Health Insurance Bureau will be the one accountable for all payments. With a well-established cost-monitoring system, the annual health spending shares only 6.1% of GDP. The satisfactory rate to the health insurance system achieves 80 percent. In addition, Taiwan's life expectancy is older than 80 years old in 2018."

Chang Gung Memorial Hospital (CGMH) is the largest academic medical centre ever accredited by the Joint Commission International (JCI). It also receives nation-wide medical standard evaluation accreditation and various SNQ awards over the years. CGMH alone receives the largest number of international patients in all of Taiwan, treating over 10,000 foreign patients every year. International Medical Center (IMC) at CGMH offers fast-tracked services with 'personal medical coordinator' to the international patients to guide through the best available medical services and to assist with every aspect of patient's medical journey. The medical coordinator assists in finding the most appropriate medical specialist, arrange appointments and consultations, guides on the travel necessities and offers financial counselling. The representative can also guide on the miscellaneous yet primary requirements like accommodation, transport, currency exchange and religious/cultural needs. Upon confirmation of the appointment, the coordinator will present the estimated range of total medical expenses. An experienced medical experts team later prepares the treatment plan by drafting a specifically tailored treatment schedule based on the medical background of each patient. Eventually, patients receive a detailed statement describing the treatment process and its estimated costs.

Dr Chen Hsien-Wei, International Medical Center, CGMH, says "CGMH comprises a network of seven hospital branches over Taiwan. Accommodating an average of 8.6 million outpatient visits and around 370,000 admissions every year, the hospital is estimated to have served a total of a third of the overall population of Taiwan. Today, CGMH is the largest academic centre ever accredited by the Joint Commission International [JCI (2014-2017)]. Having been featured in National Geographic Channel's documentary, "Taiwan's Medical Miracle," our hospital's medical achievements are both nationally and internationally acclaimed. At CGMH we prioritize patient-centred care, offering domestic, as well as cross-border, patients with quality medical services, state-of-the-art technology, and superior values"

Taiwan International Healthcare Training Center (TIHTC)

Taiwan International Healthcare Training Center (TIHTC) has 34 training centre across four cardinal directions of Taiwan. Speaking about Taiwan's advanced medical specialties & training program, Minister of Health and Welfare, Mr Shih-Chung Chen says, "Taiwan has well-organized clinical training programs for foreign medical professionals since 2002. We have outstanding hospitals that have been recognized internationally in the area of complicated medical surgeries, such as organ transplantation like liver and lung, treatments for cardiovascular diseases and extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO), minimally invasive surgery, and many more. Having these advanced skills and knowledge, we have attracted more than 3000 medical professionals' from 126 countries to Taiwan for clinical training programs in the past 5 years."

Taiwan's high-quality medical services and its National Health Insurance (NHI) program have been globally recognized and gained recognition at international media outlets including the National Geographic Channel (2012). CNN hails Taiwan's medical achievement by quoting Taiwan's 'National Health Insurance' as one of the most renowned policies which make Taiwan's healthcare service outstanding in the world.

Taiwan's medical power and fare cost-effective practices are the reason foreigners do not hesitate to seek medical treatment across the sea. The excellent standards of hygiene maintained in the hospitals and surroundings also attract a lot of patients to the country. There are also considerable authentic Medical travel agencies whom the hospitals carefully select and efficiently supervise for genuine guidance to foreign patients.

The excellent medical services and the hospitable natives make Taipei a top choice for medical tourism.

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