

Medical Tourism

“At this point, it’s for people outside of the country, but who’s to say tomorrow it won’t be for people inside the country?”

—Doris Grinspun, CEO of Registered Nurses of Ontario



Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. What reasons do people have for seeking medical attention in other countries?
2. What risks are there in going abroad for medical treatment?
3. Why would medical tourism be a concern for taxpayers in some countries?

B. Vocabulary Preview

Match the words on the left with the correct meanings on the right.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| ___ 1. abroad | a) an offer that turns out to be a lie or trick |
| ___ 2. cosmetic surgery | b) related to the heart |
| ___ 3. reliable | c) trustworthy |
| ___ 4. cardiac | d) the transfer of body parts or blood to a patient in need |
| ___ 5. transplant | e) in another country |
| ___ 6. scam | f) a medical procedure to improve one’s looks rather than one’s health |
| ___ 7. infection | g) a secondary difficulty that arises |
| ___ 8. complication | h) poor treatment from a professional that does not meet set standards |
| ___ 9. malpractice | i) bacteria or viruses that enter the body and make a person sick |
| ___ 10. sue | j) to take a person to court in hopes of getting money for a wrongdoing |
| ___ 11. appealing | k) to become the most important person or thing |
| ___ 12. take priority | l) attractive |

Reading

MEDICAL TOURISM

Is your hospital open for business?

1. Medical tourists are people who travel to another country to receive health care. This includes people who travel from poor countries to richer countries for treatment, as well as those who travel from developed nations to developing nations. Medical tourism is a multi-billion-dollar business with an expected growth rate of 25% per year.
2. There are several reasons why people seek health care **abroad**. Sometimes they want to avoid a long waiting list for surgery. Other times, surgical procedures are cheaper abroad. This is often the case with dental care and **cosmetic surgery**. Patients may also want treatment from a **reliable** specialist, such as a **cardiac** surgeon with a good reputation. In some cases, a risky procedure, such as an organ **transplant**, may not be available in one's home country.
3. The risks associated with medical tourism are quite high. Medical care **scams** are common. Medical staff may not have the training and skills they advertise. **Infections** from unsanitary medical supplies, such as needles, can be life-threatening. In addition, medical procedures often result in **complications**. These may not become apparent until after a patient has returned home. While follow-up treatment in a foreign country is very costly, **suing** a foreign doctor for **malpractice** is typically impossible.
4. The term medical tourism suggests that patients can do more than just get care. They can also take in the sites of a new country before or after their procedure. Visiting a doctor or dentist while on a vacation in a sunny destination is **appealing** to many North Americans. Those who are willing to take the risks have to factor in transportation and accommodation into their medical costs.
5. In many underdeveloped nations where there already aren't enough beds and physicians, residents now have to compete for care with wealthy foreign patients. In developed nations where the top specialists work, some fear that wealthy foreigners will soon **take priority** over taxpayers on waiting lists.

Comprehension

Discuss these questions in pairs, and write the answers in your notebook.

1. How popular is medical tourism?
2. Why does the reading mention needles?
3. Why might an American choose Mexico for cosmetic surgery?
4. What does the reading say about medical complications?
5. What problem does medical tourism contribute to in undeveloped nations?

Vocabulary Review

A. Recognizing Vocabulary

Which word from page 1 is described in the sentence?

#	Sentence	Word
1	She took her doctor to court due to malpractice.	
2	The surgery went well, but a few days later she got an infection.	
3	My aunt is going to a specialist to get some wrinkles removed from her face.	
4	The child who received the liver transplant should be your first concern right now.	
5	I like the idea of being able to get my teeth fixed near a beach resort.	
6	My cardiac specialist is always available and always on time.	
7	I have to go to another country to get a lung transplant.	
8	The free hotel offer was advertised by a dental surgeon who did not exist.	
9	If the needles aren't cleaned properly, the patients might get sick.	
10	This clinic is for patients who have had heart attacks or heart transplants.	

B. Synonyms or Antonyms

Are the following words synonyms or antonyms?

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-------|---------------------------|-------|
| 1. scam / honesty | _____ | 4. appealing / disgusting | _____ |
| 2. cosmetic / non-essential | _____ | 5. infection / disease | _____ |
| 3. transplant / transfer | _____ | 6. abroad / at home | _____ |

Grammar Review

WHILE / ALTHOUGH / THOUGH

In most cases, the conjunction “while” means *at the same time* or *during the time*.

- While I cleaned the house, I listened to music.
- Don’t use your phone while we are eating dinner.

Sometimes the word “while” is used to show a contrast, just like *although/though* or *whereas*.

- While medical tourism can be costly, it can also save you money.
- While many teachers don’t like this use, it is an acceptable form according to modern dictionaries.

Note:

The word “though” can always be used for “although,” while the word “although” can’t always be used for “though.”

- Although/Though I don’t have enough money for the procedure, I am still going to get it.
- I am going on vacation, although/though I don’t have enough money.
- I have enough money to pay the dental bill. I don’t have enough money for a vacation, though.

Discussion Questions


1. Is medical care expensive in your home country?
2. Do you think medical tourism is the way of the future?
3. What other problems related to this industry can you think of (not mentioned in the reading)?
4. If money were no object, which countries would you consider going to for specialized medical care? Which would you not want to go to?

Critical Thinking

IN PAIRS OR SMALL GROUPS

How might language barriers affect one’s experience as a medical tourist?
Discuss as a group and share your observations with your class.

Listening – Gap Fill

 <http://blog.esllibrary.com/2015/10/28/podcast-medical-tourism/>

Fill in the blanks as you listen to the recording.

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1. developed, multi-billion-dollar
2. surgery, reliable, procedure
3. advertise, apparent
4. take in, accommodation
5. compete, specialists, foreigners

ANSWERS: