

Medical tourism market expects strong growth for 2010

Global turnover expected to reach roughly 75 billion euros / Hospitalscout.com publishes first study findings

Dortmund, 27 April 2010– The medical tourism* market will see strong growth this year. That is the assessment of the parties behind the portal Hospitalscout.com, which keeps the most comprehensive hospital directories worldwide. "We expect that turnover can be increased by approximately 65 percent compared to 2009, reaching a total of 75 billion euros or 100 billion US dollars," predicted Dr. Bettina Horster, manager at VIVAL Software AG, which runs Hospitalscout.com. "Considering the fact that only three to four percent of the global population travel to other countries at all in order to receive treatment there, that number is remarkably high."

The German-based company initiated and implemented the study "Medical Tourism - Profit from Global Health Care"*** in cooperation with the consulting agency Reza Consultancy. According to the findings, 53 percent of EU residents alone are "willing to travel" for such a reason. That's nearly twice as many as in the United States, where 27 percent like or would like to receive treatment in a foreign country. This difference can be explained by the geographic proximity of other countries within the EU on the one hand, and previously existing cooperation agreements on the other. "These findings clearly show how exciting it is to investigate and outline the major differences between various regions of the world and the flows of medical tourists," Dr. Bettina Horster said about the intention behind the study.

The study also wants to highlight the obstacles that continue to impede market growth. The authors of the study consider a lack of information the main problem. According to the study, it remains difficult for all parties involved in medical tourism - from consumers to hospitals - to gather comprehensive information about supply and demand worldwide. "In addition, there are other relevant aspects: convenience, satisfaction with the national health care system - and cost, of course, at least for consumers from countries where treatment is comparatively affordable," Dr. Bettina Horster specified. "Finally, ethical and moral considerations, as well as issues such as aftercare and responsibility for payment in the event of complications in the home country, are often deciding factors." That's where Hospitalscout.com comes in, which provides a variety of information for medical tourists to help them make the decision whether to seek treatment abroad.

The reasons behind medical tourism are complex. According to Dr. Bettina Horster, four major motives became apparent during the main studies, however: "We noticed that certain treatment methods or surgeries are not available in every country, which is why patients choose to go abroad." In addition, certain specialists' good reputation or recognition of the superior quality of particular treatment methods also play a role. "Furthermore, the differences regarding waiting periods can be huge," Dr. Bettina Horster continued, "and in the end, cost is always a consideration." Even after taking expenses for travel and accommodation into account, the cost of receiving treatment abroad is often lower than at home.

Overall, however, medical tourism is a rapidly growing market whose strengths and potential clearly outweigh the remaining problems. "In the near future, we will notice that more and

more nations will take measures to inspire patients from all over the world to take advantage of the services offered in their countries - similar to what has been happening in the wellness sector for quite a while now," the VIVAI manager predicts. These measures include improving language skills of medical personnel, active support from the health and tourism ministries, as well as new laws and guidelines such as the EU directive for cross-border health care, designed to disperse ethical and moral concerns.

**Medical tourists refers exclusively to those persons who are travelling to a foreign country solely for the purpose of receiving treatment. This does not include: immigrants, persons who temporarily or permanently live abroad, or those who travel to a foreign country for business reasons or as tourists and have to seek treatment while they are there.*

***Original title: „Medical Tourism: Profit from Global Health Care“. The findings were determined during the year 2009-2010 by a research team of eight people over a period of five months. A total of 16 so-called incoming and four outbound countries were analysed. Methods used during the study include secondary and field studies as well as interviews with industry experts. In addition, 400 Internet questionnaires were filled out and evaluated. Link to the management summary www.hospitalscout.com.*

Hospitalscout.com is one of the largest and most comprehensive hospital directories in the world. An important area of the information portal is the identification and presentation of hospitals around the world that offer services for patients from foreign countries. Today, more than 70,000 hospital addresses in 195 countries are registered at www.hospitalscout.com. Compiling information about hospitals from all over the world in one central location on the Internet addresses the increasing desire of consumers to freely select their place of medical treatment and thus contributes to a positive aspect of globalisation. The owners of Hospitalscout.com have more than ten years experience on the German market with the portal www.kliniken.de.

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