



Dental Tourism

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Abstract:

Dental tourism is a new type of tourism in which dental treatments are combined with tours, and several medical travel agencies specialize in this area. It has undoubtedly found a place in India, with the majority of foreigners visiting for dental and cosmetic procedures. Every year, millions of people travel from all over the world to India to receive dental treatment while also enjoying a wonderful vacation. A growing number of tourists are flocking to India because of the best dental care, equipment, and facilities available.

Keywords: Dental care, dental tourism, Cost, treatment

Introduction:

Tourism is one of the most important economic growth engines in most parts of the world. It is the critical area that can yield significant societal benefits. Travel is no longer about the journey; it is about the experience and memories (1). The rising cost of dental procedures, combined with months of waiting for a dentist, has made it impossible to obtain world-class care at an affordable price. Patients receiving dental treatment at some of the world's most renowned dental hospitals are now a thing of the past. However, the evolving concept of dental tourism has made high-quality dental care available at a low cost (2).

Dental tourism is a developing concept that combines a planned vacation with standardized, customized, and effective dental treatment. It is a novel type of tourism in which dental treatments are combined with tours and several medical travel agencies offer specialized services. With the arrival of many foreign tourists for dental procedures as well as cosmetic surgery, dental tourism has undoubtedly found a place in India (3).

India has a large number of multi-specialty hospitals that provide treatment at significantly lower costs than in developed countries. Many hospitals in India are becoming well-known internationally for providing health-care standards that are comparable to the best in the world. Advanced technology, skilled super-specialists, sound infrastructure, professional management, nurses, and paramedical staff have elevated the Indian health care sector to international levels. Foreign tourists to India are increasingly seeking Ayurveda, Dentistry, and Allopathic systems of medicine, hoping to be cured at a fraction of the cost in their home countries (4).

Driving force for Dental tourism-

High insurance premium costs, an increasing number of uninsured and underinsured people in developed countries. Longer waiting times in the home country are some of the factors that drive patients to other countries (5). Furthermore, the high availability of better health care services at affordable rates in developing countries, lower air fares, and the tourism aspect all contribute to the benefits of outbound dental tourism (6). In recent years, many Europeans and Americans have preferred dental tourism, owing to the savings associated with the low cost of dental services such as root canals, veneers, and patient but also the country's economy, and with little help from the government, it can be taken to remarkable levels (7).

Why India is Dental Tourism hub?

Dental treatment is expensive in some countries and is frequently not covered by national health insurance. As a result, they travel to India to have their teeth corrected at a fraction of the cost in their home country. A filling can cost between \$300 and \$400 in the United States. In India, it costs only \$20 USD. A root canal costs \$3,000 in the West but only \$70 to \$100 in India. Dentures can cost up to \$1,000 in other countries, but only \$200 in India (8).

India provides high-quality dental care using cutting-edge technology and modern facilities. Many international dental clinics are located in the country. Many of the specialized clinics have been serving tourists from the United States, the United Kingdom, and other European countries for more than 20 years. India, already known as a yoga and meditation hotspot, is now catering to tourists' smiles. Root canals, veneers, fillings, crowns, dental implants, and tooth whitening are among the most popular dental treatments (9).

Apart from spending a fraction of what one would in the US, one gets to vacation in exotic Eastern locales. Dentists in India are highly educated and experienced. Tourists who have received dental treatment in India are extremely pleased with the results. There was previously an influx of patients from neighboring countries and West Asia. There has recently been a significant increase in patients from the United Kingdom, the United States, and Europe. Cheaper treatment is a huge draw, and during a recession, the cost factor is extremely important. Cost is not the only motivator. Indian clinical and paramedical talent is internationally recognized and accredited. Third-party involvement, such as health tourism, has also been beneficial (11).

Every year, millions of people fly from the United States and Europe to tourist destinations in India for a grand vacation and dental treatment (1).

Benefits of Dental Treatment in India: -

1. Affordable dental treatments:

Dental treatments in India are affordable, and the quality is on par with international standards. Western countries and India have vastly different cost structures. (1)

Dental Procedure	Cost in US & UK (\$)		Cost in India (\$)
	General Dentist	Top End Dentist	Top End Dentist
Smile Designing	-	8,000	800-1000
Metal Free Bridge	-	5,500	500-800
Dental Implants	-	3,500	800-1000
Porcelain Metal Bridge	1,800	3,000	300-400
Porcelain Metal Crown	600	1,000	90-130
Tooth Impactions	500	2,000	90-130
Root Canal Treatment	600	1,000	80-100
Tooth Whitening	350	800	100-130
Tooth Coloured Composite Fillings	200	500	20-40
Tooth Cleaning	100	300	60-80

Fig 1: Table representing the comparison between cost of dental treatment in US & UK and India. (14)

2. Dental Specialists: -

There are over one lakh dentists in the country, with nearly 20,000 in major cities and over 10,000 dental specialists. Orthodontists, periodontists, endodontists, prosthodontists, oral and maxillofacial surgeons, pedodontics, and implantologists are among the specialists (9).

3. Insurance policies in India cover treatments that are not covered by insurance policies in other countries.:

Dental treatment is frequently not reimbursed by National Health Schemes in many countries, making it unaffordable for ordinary citizens.

Dentistry is a thriving industry in the United States, with highly qualified dentists, but it is exorbitantly priced. Only half of the population in the United States has dental insurance. Furthermore, people with comprehensive medical plans do not have dental coverage. Even if a person has adequate dental insurance, the cost of dental treatments is extremely high. The policy does not cover many dental procedures. The majority of visitors come for dental treatments such as implants, rehabilitation procedures, and cosmetic dentistry (which are most of the times not covered by their insurance policy in their country) (9).

4. English speaking doctors/ dentists:

Doctors and staff in India speak English fluently. They can effectively communicate with clients from all over the world. Furthermore, highly skilled dental surgeons gain international exposure. Teaches them excellent interpersonal and communication abilities (9).

5. *Travelers combine alternative health care with dental treatments:*

The Indian health-care industry has evolved, and many tourists combine holistic therapy with dental treatments to make the most of their vacation. (9)

6. *120 million people in US don't have dental insurance: -*

It's a fact that drives millions of Americans to seek out cheaper dental care and treatments in Mexico and other Southeastern countries. (10)

7. *Low travel cost: -*

Low-cost air travel influences dental patients' willingness to travel outside of their home country for quality dental care. (10)

Drawback of dental tourism-

Dental tourism entails a series of episodic procedures. Many procedures are crammed into brief appointments. It is difficult for patients to return to international clinics for further treatment if complications arise. All local dentists will refuse to treat problems and complications associated with dental care provided by dentists from another country. (12)

Second, liability concerns may deter some dentists from correcting substandard procedures. Legal redress approval in cases of negligent care is a significant risk associated with cross-border dental care. Most dental tourism companies require clients to sign liability waiver forms. These documents shield dental tourism businesses from legal action. According to the forms, if the client wishes to pursue legal action, he or she must do so through the courts of the country in which the dental clinic is located. Some dental tourists may discover that obtaining legal and financial redress after suffering harm while receiving dental care in another country is prohibitively expensive, impractical, or impossible. (13)

Dental Treatment and Travel Packages: -

Dental Surgeons communicate directly with travelers seeking treatment in India. The dentist enters into back-to-back agreements with travel companies to provide all types of assistance such as visas, tickets, lodging, and vacation packages. The dentist provides all treatment, whereas the travel company operates all tourism-related services. (1)

Conclusion: -

Many countries' health insurance plans do not cover dental treatment. Patients must pay for private treatment out of their own pockets. As a result, millions of people travel to India each year from all over the world to receive dental treatment while also enjoying a wonderful vacation. Dental tourism in India is well within our financial means. It is not a new discovery that dental treatment in India is ten times less expensive than in Western hospitals.

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