

India as a Global Healthcare Destination

What is India’s core competency to emerge as a global healthcare destination? To my mind, the most significant feature is that Indians view the human being in totality. Treatment in India is based on the physical, social, nutritional and spiritual needs of each individual. India is the only country which has integrated medicare with holistic therapies like ayurveda, homeopathy and yoga to hasten the healing process. In contrast to the Western approach to medicine, ayurveda works to remove the cause of illness, not just treat the disease by suggesting lifestyle and nutritional guidelines. The constraints of modern medicine have led to a growing interest in the five thousand-year-old ancient healing system of ayurveda. It teaches a new way of life, one of optimum health and well-being, and has become popular in leading spas of the world. Yoga and meditation also have their roots in India. Thus, when it comes to health care that goes beyond medical treatment, to connecting the body, mind and soul, there is no place like India. Secondly, of course, India presents significant cost advantages to foreign customers.

Optamin Medical Services was set up in the US to promote and facilitate the travel of US and Canadian patients for medical treatment to India. The name Optamin was derived from ‘Opportunities for

Box B

Cost Comparison Analysis for Selected Medical Procedures

Procedure	US	India	Savings
Bone Marrow Transplant	250000	69000	181000
Liver Transplant	300000	69000	231000
Heart Surgery	100000	10000	90000
Orthopaedic Surgery	40000	6000	34000
Cataract Surgery	5000	1250	3750

Cost in US\$

Hypothetical Savings for 50000 Procedures

Procedure	Savings (\$000)	Count (000)	Total (\$million)
Bone Marrow Transplant	181	5	905
Liver Transplant	231	1	231
Heart Surgery	90	15	1350
Orthopaedic Surgery	34	15	510
Cataract Surgery	4	14	53
		50	\$3049

Source: Estimates based on various articles and published reports

Americans in India’. Based on its detailed study, the cost comparison analysis for selected medical procedures between India and the US has been made (see Box B). The hypothetical savings for 50,000 procedures have also been calculated.

Optamin’s contention was that General Motors had approximately one million individuals in its healthcare programme. The target was that almost 50,000 medical procedures could be undergone by this population each year in India. This would lead to General Motors saving up to US\$ 3 billion a year.

In addition, the clinical outcomes in India are at par with the world’s best centres due to internationally qualified and experienced specialists and super-specialists and state-of-the-art hospitals. For instance, the Escorts Health Institute Research Centre in Delhi boasts a death rate for coronary bypass patients of 0.8 percent. This compares favourably with 2.5 percent for the same procedure in New York.⁶ India also has one of the largest pharmaceutical industries in the world and exports pharmaceuticals to more than 180 countries.