

# Chapter 12

## Sustainable Health and Medical Tourism Green Supply Chain Management: Challenges and Opportunities

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### ABSTRACT

*Travelling overseas to seek healthcare and medical tourism services is a global phenomenon. Despite the downturns such as global financial crisis and recession, medical tourism services are in demand. Travelling abroad for medical treatment/surgery is an innovation to get value for money. Due to globalization, there are demand-side and the supply-side factors that drive potential patients to seek surgery abroad. This chapter explores the complex coordinating factors that the medical travellers/patients and the healthcare service providers face, which drive the global medical tourism supply chain from patients deciding to travel abroad to the host country for surgery, until their return journey home. Therefore, building an eco-logical logistics or a health and medical tourism green supply chain management-based sustainable business of medical tourism industry is critical for safety and wellbeing of the patients/medical tourists under the new-normal paradigm, as global patients travel to receive value for money and improve their physical health and quality of life.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Traveling overseas to seek healthcare and medical tourism services is a global phenomenon and despite the downturns such as global financial crisis and recession medical tourism services are in demand (Ferrer & Medhekar, 2012; Johnson & Gorman, 2015). Travelling abroad for medical treatment and surgery is an innovation to get value for money. With access to latest medical technology and state-of-the-art medical surgery such as hip resurfacing or robotics, and other latest diagnostic tests along with trail medicines for certain treatments such as stem cell research, cosmetic which are not available due to regulatory and ethical reasons in patients own country (Cotton et al. 2014; Medhekar et al., 2014). Due to globalization, there are demand-side and the supply-side factors that drive potential patients to travel abroad for medical treatment (Cotton et al., 2014; Ferrer & Medhekar, 2012; Kumar et al., 2011; Tang & Lau, 2017). The supply-side factors from providers perspective that attract potential domestic or oversea medical patients, is information search for country, accommodation, travel plans, medical facilities and treatment availability, pre- and post-surgery care, travel and medical goods and services logistics (Medhekar et al., 2020).

There are complex coordinating factors and service providers involved in medical tourism business processes, which drive the global medical tourism supply chain from patients deciding to travel abroad to the host country for medical treatment and surgery, until their return journey home. Therefore, for building an eco-logical logistics or a green logistics based sustainable business of medical tourism industry, green healthcare supply chain logistics are critical from the supply side perspective for international patients. Safety and wellbeing of the patients/medical tourists and sustainable 'Health and Medical Tourism Green Supply Chain Management' (HMT-GSCM) eco-logistical practices (Cimprich et al., 2019; Lee & Fernando, 2015) under the new-normal paradigm is important for the sustainability of health and medical business, as global patients travel to receive value for money and improve their physical health and quality of life.

While tourism in general is a major driver of economic growth and social health and wellbeing. It is important in the aftermath of the pandemic that a transformation of the medical travel/ medical tourism industry in particular needs to move towards more sustainable practices along the health and medical tourism supply chain management (MT-SCM), to ensure that the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN-SDGs) can be achieved (Schroeder et al., 2014).

Like all other types of tourism, healthcare tourism supply chains were also impacted since the pandemic was declared in March 2020, by the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2020), when international travel came to a halt due to grounded airlines and medical travellers were either stranded in the host country or had to

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