

Medical Tourism in India: Issues of Ethics and Equity.

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Medical tourism (MT) in India calls for a critical evaluation from public health perspective. The current paper looks at the scope and potential of MT in India and perceptions of the senior doctors from private and public hospitals in the cities of Delhi, Hyderabad, Chennai and Bangalore. Based on primary and secondary data, the paper analyzes the narratives of the doctors, their views on medical tourism, the impact of MT on general health services, concerns of equity and ethics. The paper concludes that MT cannot be seen in isolation from resources, and attempts to dispel the misconceptions and misinterpretations related to MT.

There is a clear differences in the perceptions of doctors in Private and Public hospitals on the issue of MT. Very few from private sector takes a critical view and most of them feel that MT has huge potential and should be promoted and there is no direct impact on general health services. It is opined that the general health care is a state subject and the state is responsible for health care of the general public. However, most of doctors from public sector shared their concerns about the poor and the accessibility of public health services for them. And most of them believed that growth of Medical Tourism in no way is going to improve the situation in the public health sector as envisioned by few, of trickle down effect. Several issues raised by them related to ethics, equity, brain drain, disparities in salaries, technology related to MT. Also concern was expressed over the commercial nature of Medical tourism and many felt that MT should not be encouraged in public hospitals.