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Medical Tourism in Singapore: Realities and Challenges

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Abstract: Abstract This research refers to medical tourism in Singapore, as medical tourism has achieved strong growth in recent years, and has become one of the main components supporting the tourism sector in the world, as the reports of the research center (precedence reasearch) indicated that the medical tourism market reached a value of 11.56 billion dollars in 2022 and will reach 34. 6 billion dollars in 2032, and there are many factors driving this growth. There are many factors driving this growth, the most important of which is the huge scientific gap between the developed and underdeveloped world in the health field, and the resulting difference in the level of health services, medicines and techniques used in hospitals on the one hand, and on the other hand the widespread spread of promotion and electronic marketing policies for health services, and the most famous medical tourism destinations are the United States, Canada, France, Germany, Turkey ... For its part, Singapore is one of the destinations for tourists seeking health services, and one of the top ten health tourism markets in the world.

Keywords— medical tourism; tourism marketing; health services.

INTRODUCTION

The need for medical travel arises when healthcare services are either inadequate or unavailable locally. Access to medical treatment is among the most essential human needs, as it directly concerns human health, particularly under the deteriorating healthcare conditions in developing and low-income countries, coupled with limited human and material resources. In these contexts, what is commonly referred to as "medical errors" has become a notable issue.

In recent years, the medical tourism sector has witnessed remarkable growth. It is defined as the movement from one region to another, or from one country to another, for the sole purpose of receiving healthcare services—whether through public and private hospitals or through natural therapies such as sand baths and hot springs. This sector has experienced significant expansion, becoming one of the key pillars supporting global tourism. According to reports by *Precedence Research*, the medical tourism market was valued at USD 11.56 billion in 2022 and is projected to reach USD 34.6 billion by 2032.

Several factors have driven this growth, most notably the vast scientific gap between developed and

underdeveloped countries in the healthcare field, which translates into disparities in the quality of healthcare services, availability of medicines, and medical technologies used in hospitals. Additionally, the widespread adoption of digital marketing and promotional strategies for healthcare services has contributed to this expansion. Globalization has also played a significant role by facilitating cross-border interaction, the development of travel regulations, and the proliferation of modern communication and media platforms that make global healthcare offerings more accessible. Among the leading destinations for medical tourism are the United States, Canada, Singapore, France, Germany, Turkey, and Tunisia.

Singapore, in particular, has emerged as a major destination for international patients seeking healthcare services, ranking among the top ten global markets for medical tourism. The country has invested substantial capital and implemented robust legal and regulatory frameworks to advance the medical tourism sector. As a result, Singapore has become a prominent hub, attracting approximately 646,000 international medical tourists.

Based on this context, the present study addresses the following research problem:

How has Singapore managed to position itself as a leading destination for medical tourism, and what are the key future challenges it faces?

This overarching research problem gives rise to the following sub-questions:

- What is the concept of medical tourism?
- What is the current state of medical tourism worldwide?
- Does Singapore represent a promising market for medical tourism?

Research Significance:

The significance of this study lies in exploring a contemporary concept for developing tourism in general and medical tourism in particular. It aims to identify the requirements needed to achieve comparative advantage, investigate mechanisms to enhance the global medical tourism sector, examine the factors contributing to its growth, and assess its economic and social importance.

Research Methodology:

This study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach, which is considered the most suitable methodology for economic research of this nature. It enables a comprehensive examination of the key elements under study by providing definitions, clarifications, and analyses of relevant data and statistics.

Research Objectives:

The objectives of this study are to:

- Define the concept of medical tourism and identify its key drivers.
- Examine the global state of medical tourism and highlight the most attractive destinations.
- Analyze the realities and challenges of medical tourism in Singapore.

Research Structure:

The study is organized around the following themes:

- The concept of medical tourism.
- Global developments in medical tourism.

The realities and challenges of medical tourism in Singapore

Literature Review and Previous Studies

Lianto et al. (2020) investigated the determinants of medical tourism attractiveness in Singapore, emphasizing two critical factors: the country's international medical reputation and the relative affordability of healthcare services compared to other advanced economies. Their study highlighted how Singapore has globally recognized healthcare institutions, combined with transparent regulatory frameworks, play a pivotal role in attracting foreign patients. They also underscored the importance of

service quality, patient trust, and the presence of internationally accredited hospitals in enhancing Singapore's competitiveness as a medical tourism hub.

Khanna and Mukherjee (2022) conducted a comparative study between Malaysia and Singapore, focusing on the role of digital marketing tools in expanding medical tourism. Their findings revealed that while both countries actively utilize online platforms to target middle-income groups, Singapore distinguishes itself through more sophisticated digital strategies, such as the integration of patient testimonials, interactive hospital websites, and multi-language promotional campaigns. The study argued that effective digital outreach has become a decisive factor in shaping patient choices, especially among international clients who rely heavily on online information before making travel and healthcare decisions.

Alsharif et al. (2010), in one of the pioneering Arabic studies on medical tourism, examined the realities of the sector in Tunisia and Jordan. Their research shed light on structural challenges such as insufficient infrastructure, weak coordination between the public and private sectors, and limited international visibility. They argued that despite Tunisia and Jordan's natural advantages—such as geographical location, relatively lower costs, and therapeutic resources—these countries struggle to achieve sustainable growth in medical tourism due to governance issues, lack of strategic planning, and inadequate investment in international branding.

Connell (2011) provided a broader conceptual framework by analyzing both micro- and macroeconomic factors influencing medical tourism worldwide. At the micro level, the study explored elements such as patient decision-making, hospital reputation, and service quality. At the macro level, it examined the roles of government policies, international mobility regulations, global healthcare inequalities, and socio-economic disparities between developed and developing countries. Connell's work has become a foundational reference, as it contextualizes medical tourism not only as a healthcare phenomenon but also as part of global economic and social transformations.

Taken together, these studies provide valuable insights into the drivers, opportunities, and challenges of medical tourism. They collectively underscore the significance of healthcare quality, reputation, cost-effectiveness, marketing strategies, and institutional frameworks in shaping global patient mobility. However, a notable research gap remains in exploring how Singapore has managed to consolidate its position as a leading destination despite the fierce competition in the region, particularly from Malaysia and Thailand. This gap forms the basis of the present study, which aims to analyze both the current status and future challenges

of Singapore's medical tourism sector.

Theoretical Framework of Medical Tourism

The theoretical analysis of medical tourism is grounded in the *Medical Travel Demand Theory*, which examines the behavior of international patients in relation to four main determinants: cost, quality, time, and risk. This framework provides insights into why patients choose to seek healthcare abroad and how they weigh trade-offs between affordability, service standards, and treatment accessibility. In addition, the *SERVQUAL Model* of service quality is often applied to evaluate the gap between patients' expectations and the services actually delivered by healthcare institutions. Together, these models help explain the shift from recreational tourism to medical tourism in increasingly specialized and competitive environments.

Tourism, in its general sense, refers to the human activity aimed at experiencing the beauty of different destinations. It reflects the innate human need for a change of environment and the desire to explore new places. Tourism fosters intercultural exchange, facilitates the transfer of ideas, and enhances social connections across nations. Economically, it generates multiple benefits such as stimulating trade, boosting economic activity, and increasing the host country's share of foreign currency inflows.

Tourism takes multiple forms, distinguished by the number of participants, destination, and purpose. It may be individual or group-based, domestic or international. In terms of objectives, tourism can be classified into several categories, including beach tourism, forest tourism, conference tourism, religious tourism, and medical tourism.

The concept of medical tourism—also referred to as *health tourism* or, in some literature, *hospital tourism*—is broadly defined as the cross-border movement of individuals seeking medical care when their home country lacks sufficient or adequate healthcare coverage (Revue Géoconfluences, 2012, p. 01). Similarly, Lunt et al. (2011, p. 08) describe it as the organized travel outside one's regular healthcare system with the explicit aim of improving or restoring health through direct medical intervention. Another perspective defines it as traveling to access superior healthcare services, a practice that has witnessed rapid growth in recent years and has become a vital option for many patients worldwide (Lianto et al., 2020, p. 02).

Historically, medical tourism originated from the movement of individuals seeking natural healing environments, such as desert regions for hot sand

therapy, forests for recovery from respiratory or rheumatic diseases, or coastal areas for the therapeutic benefits of saline waters in treating skin conditions. Over time, this phenomenon evolved into international travel to benefit not only from natural resources but also from advanced medical facilities and specialized hospitals.

From an economic standpoint, medical tourism plays a significant role in generating revenue for host countries, given that medical tourists typically stay for relatively extended periods and incur substantial expenses during their treatment and recovery (Zaid Munir Aboudi, 2016, p. 48). According to Lafrenière (2018, p. 20), three conditions are essential for medical tourism activities to exist:

- ✓ Traveling a considerable distance from one's place of residence.
- ✓ The primary purpose of travel must be to obtain medical treatment.
- ✓ The medical purpose must remain independent from recreational or leisure-related objectives.

In recent years, this form of tourism has experienced notable expansion and has attracted increasing attention from economists and policymakers alike, being recognized as one of the fastest-growing sectors and a key source of foreign currency inflows. Typically, the duration of stay for medical tourists is relatively short but involves high costs, especially when the host country offers natural healing resources such as a healthy climate, therapeutic sands, beaches, forests, and mineral waters, in addition to modern hospitals, skilled physicians, and specialized medical staff (Zaid Munir Aboudi, 2016, p. 47).

In summary, medical tourism can be defined as a type of tourism that does not primarily aim at leisure or recreation but rather at seeking medical treatment—whether through natural therapies in spas, mountainous and desert regions, or coastal areas, or through healthcare services provided by public hospitals and private clinics.

Factors Driving the Development of Medical Tourism

Several drivers have facilitated the spread and expansion of medical tourism across national borders, among them:

Scientific and Technological Advances: The scientific revolution and rapid technological progress in medical sciences have led to parallel advancements in diagnostic and therapeutic equipment, such as imaging technologies, radiotherapy, and cancer treatment devices. These

innovations have significantly boosted the global flows of medical tourism.

National Attention to Medical Tourism:

In recent years, countries such as the United States, France, Spain, Turkey, and Singapore have prioritized medical tourism in their national tourism development strategies, integrating it as a central pillar of local tourism promotion.

Rising Standards of Living:

The increase in per capita GDP, especially in Gulf countries, Europe, and the United States, has enhanced individuals' ability to travel abroad for medical care and to benefit from advanced healthcare services in developed countries.

Disparities in Healthcare Quality:

Developmental gaps between advanced and less-developed countries, particularly in medical science and its implications for healthcare quality, have driven individuals—especially those from middle- and high-income groups—to seek treatment in medically advanced countries. Furthermore, the fear of medical errors, which have become alarmingly prevalent in some regions, has encouraged patients to travel abroad to specialized hospitals known for higher success rates and stronger patient trust.

Ease of Travel:

The evolution of land, air, and sea transportation has facilitated tourism in general and medical tourism in particular. Recently, visa facilitation measures have been introduced to allow patients easier access to foreign healthcare. Host countries for medical tourism have developed favorable regulations to simplify travel and residency permits, in line with broader strategies of promoting and marketing healthcare services.

Advancements in Media and Communication:

Digital technologies, communication platforms, and the internet have expanded access to global healthcare information. Clinics and hospitals increasingly use websites and social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to promote their services and attract international patients. This digital engagement has been met with strong interest, effectively increasing the scale of medical tourist flows.

Evolution of National Legislation:

Governments have recognized the economic potential of medical tourism and introduced legal reforms to promote it, including policies facilitating patient entry, health insurance integration, and social security regulations. These measures are designed to encourage foreign patients and strengthen the sector nationally.

Avoiding Waiting Lists:

Overcrowded public healthcare systems often result in long waiting lists for consultations and surgeries. Medical tourism abroad offers patients the opportunity to bypass these delays and access timely treatment, particularly for urgent procedures where time is a critical factor in determining recovery outcomes.

Medical Errors:

Fear of medical errors has been a decisive factor in the growth of medical tourism. Concerns over frequent mistakes in public hospitals have prompted patients to seek treatment in institutions—domestic or international—that provide higher guarantees of safety and success. This trend has been especially evident in recent years, with significant numbers of Algerian patients traveling to Tunisia and Turkey in search of better healthcare options.

The Importance of Medical Tourism:

Medical tourism has received considerable attention from policymakers and decision-makers, primarily due to its economic significance for both host and home countries (Zaid Munir Aboudi, 2016, p. 48).

For Host Countries:

States actively encourage inbound tourism by developing multiple branches of local tourism—including beach, cultural, religious, and medical tourism—because of their wide-ranging economic, social, and cultural benefits. The expansion of medical tourism and the growth of international patient flows contribute to higher tourism revenues, facilitate economic diversification, and reduce dependence on single-resource economies. Moreover, it generates foreign currency inflows essential for economic activity and global positioning.

Medical tourism also creates direct and indirect employment opportunities by absorbing university graduates, doctors, dentists, nurses, technicians, and healthcare staff, while indirectly supporting other professions and services. Beyond economic impacts, it enhances the host country's international reputation and strengthens its image as an attractive global destination.

For Home Countries:

Although outbound medical travel may drain foreign currency reserves and is often viewed as a form of reverse tourism, it also presents important advantages. The global development of medical tourism increases opportunities for patients to access treatments unavailable locally, thereby addressing gaps in surgical specialties and healthcare provision. This improves both physical and psychological well-being, while reducing social tensions stemming from

deficiencies in local healthcare systems. Furthermore, medical tourism enables the transfer of advanced medical technologies and expertise to the

home country, contributing to the professional development of local healthcare personnel.

Global Developments in Medical Tourism

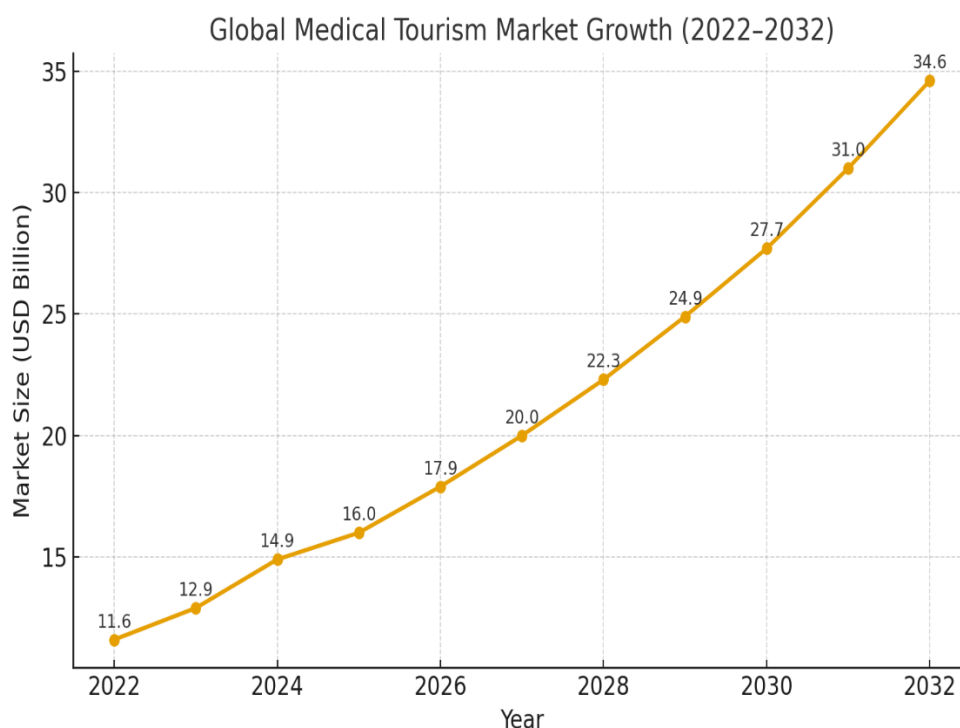
Countries no longer focus on broad sectors but instead concentrate on niche areas of strength. This trend is driven by rising international competition.

Within the tourism sector, for example, countries with strong reputations now specialize in narrower subfields: some invest in developing facilities for conferences and academic tourism, while others prioritize religious tourism. Similarly, a growing number of countries—including Canada, Singapore, Spain, and Tunisia in North Africa—have chosen to specialize in medical tourism. These nations have invested heavily in high-quality services, competitive pricing, and improved accessibility in order to attract international patients and strengthen their competitive edge in the global market.

Table 01: Global Medical Tourism Market Growth (2022–2032), in Billion USD

	2026	2025	2024	2023	2022
	17.9	16	14.9	12.9	11.6
2032	2031	2030	2029	2028	2027
34.6	31.01	27.7	24.9	22.3	20

Source precedence research, Medical Tourism; market size 2023 to 2032; at cite <https://www.precedenceresearch.com>



The market started at USD 11.6 billion in 2022.

It shows steady growth, reaching USD 34.6 billion by 2032.

The overall trend reflects a continuous upward trajectory, driven by factors such as technological advancements, rising income levels, and the facilitation of international travel.

Table 02: Medical Tourism by Age Group Worldwide in 2021

Above 60	60-40	30-18	Age Group
25%	45%	15%	Percentage(%)

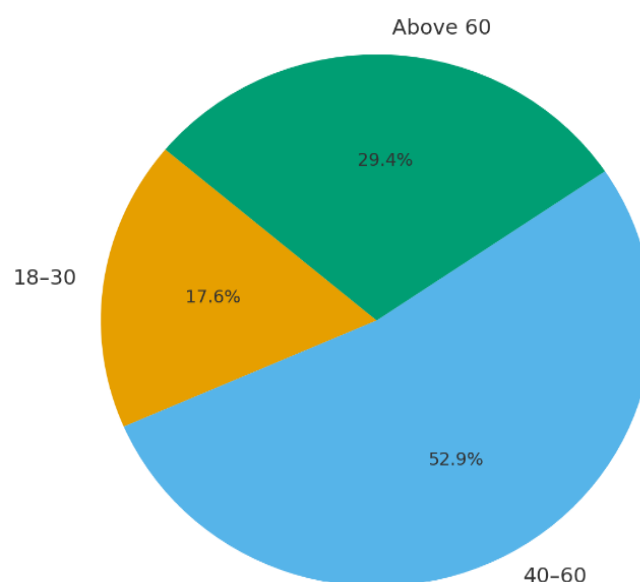
Source Deb, T. (2024) Medical Tourism Statistics 2024 By Landscape, Healthcare, Treatment, Market.us Media, 10 April. Available from <https://media.market.us/medical-tourism-statistics/>

From the table, we observe the development of the global medical tourism market, which increased from USD 12.6 billion in 2022 to USD 16.63 billion in 2025. According to the OECD report (Neil Lunt et al., 2011, p.11), the most demanded specialties by medical tourists include:

- Cosmetic surgeries
- Dentistry
- Cardiovascular treatments and surgeries
- Orthopedic surgery and joint replacement
- Bariatric surgery
- Fertility treatments
- Organ, cell, and tissue transplantation
- Ophthalmic surgeries
- Medical check-ups and diagnostic procedures

It is further projected that the market will reach USD 34.6 billion by 2032. The sector's growth is attributed to several factors, such as the overall expansion of the global tourism market, the spread of pandemics and global diseases (e.g., COVID-19), as well as the rising demand for modern treatments related to congenital deformities and cosmetic medicine. Moreover, reports indicate that in 2021, 45% of medical tourists were within the age group 40–60 years, while 25% were over 60 years old.

Medical Tourism by Age Group Worldwide (2021)



Distribution of Medical Tourism by Age Group Worldwide, 2021.

The data indicate that the **40–60 age group** accounts for the largest share at **45%** of total medical tourists, reflecting the growing demand for specialized treatments and surgeries related to chronic diseases at this stage of life. The **over-60 age group** represents **25%**, highlighting the impact of aging and the increasing need for international healthcare services. By contrast, the **18–30 age group** constitutes only **15%**, which can be explained by lower incidence of serious illnesses and major surgeries, with most medical travel within this group limited to areas such as cosmetic procedures and fertility treatments.

Table (3): Global Ranking of Medical Tourism Destinations

Global Rank	Country	Index
01	Canada	76.47
02	Singapore	76.43
03	Japan	74.23
04	Spain	72.93

Global Rank	Country	Index
05	United Kingdom	71.92
06	Dubai	71.85
07	Costa Rica	71.73
09	Abu Dhabi	70.26
10	India	69.80
10	France	69.61

Source medical tourism; index, Overall MTI Ranking, Global Healthcare Resources & International Healthcare Resource Center, p10.

Based on the table below, which illustrates the ranking of the top ten destinations for medical tourism worldwide according to the Medical Tourism Index, Canada ranks first with a score of 76.47. Asia represents the largest market for medical tourism globally, while in Europe, Spain, the United Kingdom, and France stand out in this field. The ranking of countries aligns closely with their level of economic and scientific development. In the Arab world, Dubai holds the sixth position globally with a score of 71.85, being well known for its advanced medical centers and the prevalence of specialized clinics. The report also highlights other Arab countries showing remarkable progress in medical tourism, such as Oman, Egypt, Morocco, Bahrain, Jordan, Qatar, and Kuwait.

From this analysis, it can be concluded that medical tourism is a form of tourism aimed at healing, whether through natural therapies or treatments in hospitals. It has witnessed significant growth, reaching a global market value of USD 34.6 billion in 2023, with the majority of demand concentrated among the 40–60 age group. Among the leading destinations worldwide are Canada, Singapore, and Japan.

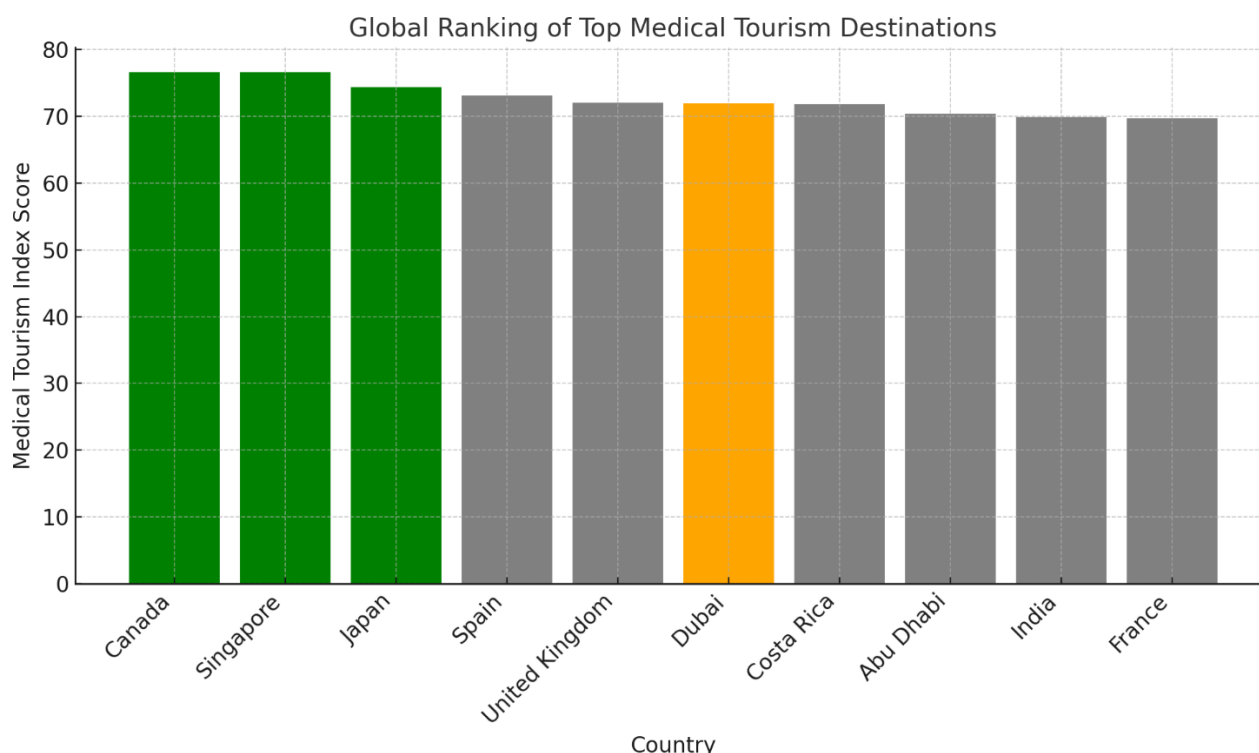
Medical tourism has now evolved into a distinct industry involving numerous direct and indirect stakeholders, including:

- Business owners;
- Intermediaries;
- Healthcare institutions;
- Insurance companies;
- Online platforms;
- Conference organizers and media professionals (Neil Lunt et al., 2011, p.18).

The global health crisis of COVID-19 had a major impact on the future of medical tourism, as local health systems proved insufficient and countries turned to bilateral and multilateral cooperation to overcome the pandemic, including the provision of vaccines from Russia and Germany.

In this context, a collaboration emerged between the World Health Organization (WHO) Europe and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) to address current and future health crises. This coalition of 25 European countries aims to:

- Mitigate the impacts of health crises;
- Strengthen the resilience of health and tourism systems;
- Safeguard the health of tourists and host communities;
- Enhance joint efforts to develop infrastructure;
- Advance digital innovations and early-warning systems;
- Assess shared risks and benefits (WHO, 2024).



The figure illustrates the Medical Tourism Index scores for the top ten global destinations. Canada, Singapore, and Japan (highlighted in green) lead the ranking, reflecting their advanced healthcare systems and international reputation. Dubai (highlighted in orange) stands out as the top-ranked Arab destination, positioned sixth globally with a score of 71.85, showcasing its investment in advanced medical centers and specialized clinics. Other destinations, such as Spain, the United Kingdom, and France, align with their high levels of economic and scientific development. Overall, the chart highlights the geographic diversity of medical tourism hubs, spanning North America, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East.

The Reality and Challenges of Medical Tourism in Singapore

Singapore, located in Southeast Asia, is renowned for its high educational standards, with a strong emphasis on quality and rigor. This has enabled the country to advance its healthcare system, which relies on highly qualified human resources. In 2024, Singapore welcomed approximately 646,000 international patients, generating revenues estimated at USD 270 million, with the majority of patients coming from Indonesia, India, Malaysia, and the Gulf states (W. Ayman Falak Medina, 2025).

Comparative Advantages of Medical Tourism in Singapore

International medical tourists are generally drawn to destinations offering a unique combination of advantages such as advanced healthcare standards, competitive treatment costs, the availability of skilled professionals, and well-developed infrastructure. Singapore has succeeded in positioning itself as a regional hub by leveraging these factors.

Affordable Treatment Costs in Singapore

Although Singapore is often perceived as a relatively high-cost destination compared to some Asian competitors like Thailand or India, it remains attractive due to the balance it offers between cost and quality. Treatment prices are generally 30–40% lower than those in the United States or Western Europe, while maintaining internationally accredited medical standards. For example, cardiac bypass surgery in Singapore may cost less than half the price of the same procedure in the U.S., yet is delivered by surgeons trained in world-class institutions. This cost-quality equilibrium enhances patient trust and justifies the preference for Singapore among middle- and high-income patients from neighboring regions.

Availability of Qualified Human Resources

Singapore boasts a large pool of doctors, surgeons, and healthcare professionals trained in globally recognized universities. The majority of its hospitals are accredited by the Joint Commission International (JCI), ensuring compliance with the highest international standards. The multilingual capacity of its medical staff (English, Mandarin, Malay, Tamil) also facilitates communication with diverse patients.

Advanced Healthcare Infrastructure

The country has invested heavily in building **state-of-the-art hospitals and specialized centers**, such as those focusing on oncology, cardiology, and fertility treatments. Singapore's Changi General Hospital and the National University Hospital are often cited among the top facilities in Asia. Moreover, the seamless integration of healthcare with hospitality services (luxury accommodations, concierge services, and wellness programs) enhances the overall medical tourism experience.

Strategic Geographic Location and Connectivity

Situated at the crossroads of Southeast Asia, Singapore benefits from excellent **air connectivity**, with Changi International Airport serving as a major regional hub. This facilitates patient inflows from neighboring countries and beyond, supported by visa policies that are relatively accommodating for medical travelers.

Table (4): Comparison of Treatment Costs in South Korea, Singapore, and the United States (in USD)

Treatment Field	South Korea	Singapore	United States
Cardiac diseases	26,000	17,200	123,000
Vascular diseases	17,700	13,400	28,200
Heart valve replacement	39,900	16,900	170,000
Knee replacement	17,500	16,000	35,000
Hip replacement	21,000	13,900	40,364
Spinal fusion	16,900	12,800	110,000
In vitro fertilization	7,900	14,900	12,400
Uterine prolapse repair	10,400	10,400	15,400

Source research office, legislative council decretariat; information promoting Medical Tourism in singapore and malaysia; in01/2025;

From the table above, it is observed that the cost of medical treatment in Singapore is lower compared to both South Korea and the United States, particularly in areas related to internal medicine such as cardiology, heart valve replacement, orthopedic surgeries, and cosmetic procedures. For example, the cost of spinal fusion surgery in Singapore amounts to 12,800 USD, compared to 16,900 USD in South Korea and as high as 110,000 USD in the United States. This significant cost advantage has made Singapore a preferred destination for thousands of medical tourists worldwide.

Availability of Medical Personnel in Singapore

Availability of Medical Trainees in Singapore (2013–2023)

Year	Local Trainees (Number)	Local Trainees (%)	Foreign Trainees (Number)	Foreign Trainees (%)
2013	6,894	60.3%	4,539	39.7%
2015	7,485	57.6%	5,505	42.4%
2017	8,071	57.9%	5,870	42.1%
2019	8,836	59.4%	6,040	40.6%
2021	9,646	60.1%	6,395	39.9%
2023	10,527	60.3%	6,920	39.7%

Source precedence research, Medical Tourism; market size 2023 to 2032; at cite <https://www.precedenceresearch.com>

Singapore possesses a strong pool of highly skilled physicians with an outstanding international reputation. Their number increased from 6,894 (60.3%) local and foreign doctors in 2013 to 10,527 (60.3%) in 2023. This growth contributed to the rise of medical tourism revenues, which moved from USD 220 million in 2020 to USD 270 million in 2024, while creating nearly 15,000 jobs in various sectors. Nevertheless, medical tourism still represents only a marginal share of the national GDP, estimated at 0.01% in 2024.

Advanced Infrastructure in Singapore

Medical tourism in Singapore has experienced several key milestones that marked turning points in the sector's infrastructure, including:

- **2003:** Launch of a national initiative to promote medical tourism and highlight Singapore's healthcare potential, known as "*SingaporeMedicine*".
- **2006:** Expansion of advanced healthcare services and the establishment of specialized centers such as the *National Heart Centre* and the *National Cancer Centre*.
- **2010:** Opening of *Khoo Teck Puat Hospital*, a multi-specialty hospital offering advanced medical services.
- **2020:** Inauguration of *Outram Community Hospital* to strengthen rehabilitation and post-surgery care.

SWOT Analysis of Medical Tourism in Singapore

Strengths:

- Globally recognized medical quality.
- Highly qualified and internationally trained medical staff.
- Political stability and transparent regulations.

Weaknesses:

- High cost of living, which raises the overall cost of treatment and accommodation.
- Limited contribution of the sector to GDP.

Opportunities:

- Expansion of regional markets (ASEAN, Gulf countries).
- International partnerships in medical education and training.

Threats:

- Increasing competition from Malaysia, Thailand, and Turkey.
- Exchange rate fluctuations and rising operational costs.

1. Factors Driving the Development of Medical Tourism in Singapore

The development of medical tourism in Singapore is closely linked to the broader national strategy of promoting various forms of tourism, including eco-tourism, sports tourism, conference and event tourism, and medical tourism. Several factors have contributed to this growth (Ebrahim & Subhadra, p.76):

- **Quality of education:** The reputation of medical tourism depends largely on the quality of medical professionals. Singapore's globally renowned physicians and surgeons reflect the country's strong educational system.
- **Competitiveness of tourism:** Innovative management in developing both general and medical tourism.
- **Economic growth:** Modern economic infrastructure, liberalization, and international openness.
- **Political stability.**
- **High-quality healthcare and competitive advantages.**
- **Trust and safety** in medical transactions.
- **International accreditation** of many Singaporean hospitals.

- **Future vision:** The government's active role in promoting medical tourism.

2. Challenges of Medical Tourism in Singapore

Singapore faces several challenges in maintaining and further enhancing its achievements in medical tourism, among which:

- **Rising external competition:** The most significant challenge comes from countries such as Canada, the United States, France, and Turkey, which often offer more affordable or more diversified medical options.
- **Exchange rate fluctuations:** The appreciation of the Singapore dollar against the U.S. dollar and other currencies increases the cost of healthcare, travel, and accommodation.
- **High costs:** Sustaining growth in medical tourism requires significant capital investments in hospital development, physician training, and technological modernization.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study highlights several key findings:

- Medical tourism refers to the movement of individuals across borders to seek medical treatment, often due to insufficient healthcare coverage in their home country.
- Its development is driven by scientific progress, growing interest in medical tourism, increasing welfare levels, disparities in healthcare standards, ease of travel, modern communication, and favorable legislation.
- Medical tourism generates significant foreign currency revenues, stimulates the healthcare sector, and creates thousands of jobs, while also allowing patients to access advanced treatments abroad.
- Several countries, including Canada, the United States, Germany, and France, have become leading destinations for medical tourism.
- Singapore stands out for its advanced healthcare system and highly skilled workforce, making it the world's second-leading destination for medical tourists.

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