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MEDICAL TOURISM — BENEFITS AND RISKS

**A Guide of Awareness on Undergoing Cosmetic
Procedures Abroad**

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ABSTRACT

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<p>Medical travel is one of the most rapidly growing fields in tourism, expecting by 2012 to grow to be a \$100 billion business with more than 780,000,000 patients traveling abroad to receive care from foreign doctors, dentists, and hospitals. The aim for this research was to provide an overview of the benefits and risks of medical tourism. Furthermore, provide an awareness guide for undergoing cosmetic procedures abroad.</p> <p>The methodology that has been used for this research has been qualitative analysis of texts and books from experts as well as researchers in the field. Using theses text and books as references there has been the possibility to reach outcome and conclusions in the different stages of the report.</p> <p>The result of the research was that it is essential to have a medical travel guide to help tourist to acquire a high qualitative and secure procedures in facilities abroad. Risks that come with medical travel, specifically cosmetic procedures, can be prevented by searching for the background and information of the destination, facility and those who will take part in the procedure.</p>		
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ABSTRACT
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1 INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, the purpose is to describe the risks and benefits of medical tourism. Furthermore, to help give guidance on how to plan a medical travel that would be most beneficial for the one making the travel.

The interest for this case started by noticing and reading about the increase of medical treatments that are combined with travelling to destinations for holidays. It came as a surprise the great amount of people that were having plastic surgery or dental surgery while they were having their trips in places like Thailand, India or Costa Rica.

The popularity of this business is mainly due to the low cost of the procedures in foreign countries. This will be shown further on in this thesis.

Because of the low cost of the procedures there has been some concerns regarding the safety of these treatments abroad. These concerns regard the standard and quality of the treatment as well as the qualification of the people taking care of the procedures. The concern for this is great, because the lack of this safety can be mortal for the patient.

The case focuses also on how the lack of information and awareness that people have concerning medical travel, results often in diseases, mistreatment, illegal and unethical procedures, etc.

This study will furthermore give an overview of the benefits and advantages of medical tourism, specifically in cosmetic treatments. Additionally, the study will also provide a guide of awareness and preventive suggestions to avoid the risks. Finally this will give a conclusion on the point of view towards medical tourism.

2 METHODOLOGY USED FOR RESEARCH

In the following chapter the methodology that has been used to conduct this thesis will be presented. It will be explained the type of methodology that was chosen as well as how it has affected the outcome of the research. The methodology of this research will be essential to evaluate the validity and reliability of the research.

2.1 Research method

There are two types of major research methods that can be used when doing a research. These are qualitative research and quantitative research. These two methods differ mainly on the emphasis of where the research has been taken from. When choosing a method it is important to know what the researcher wants to focus on. (Veal 2006, 92-195.)

Qualitative research may be also approached from different methods and one of these methods is text analysis. When doing qualitative research through text analysis the researcher shall focus on interpreting and analyzing texts, visual and audio-visual content. This information is then analyzed in accordance to the research being made. (Veal 2006, 203.)

The research method that has been used in this thesis is qualitative research method. The form of qualitative research that was chosen was text analysis. We have used this type of research in texts, book, articles and web pages will be examined. From the material and information it is possible to gain understanding of the factors needed for awareness in a guide for cosmetic procedures abroad.

2.2 Validity and reliability

When doing research it is important to go through carefully the validity and reliability of the research. Reliability in this case focuses on how reliable and correct the source of information is that has been used in the research. Validity on the other hand will focus on how useful the information is in subject to the research. (Thurén 2007, 26.)

To ensure the reliability and validity of the thesis there has been a usage of books and texts from experts in the field, as well as statements and articles from authoritative accreditations of the field.

3 THE PHENOMENON OF MEDICAL TOURISM

Medical tourism is a term involving people who travel to a different place to receive treatment for a disease, ailment, or condition, and who are seeking lower cost of care, higher quality of care, better access to care, or different care than they could receive at home. (Global Spa Summit LLC 2011.)

This definition explains why medical tourism (also called medical travel, health tourism or global healthcare) has become such a rapidly growing practice for many travellers around the world. Experts predict that by 2012, medical tourism will grow to be a \$100 billion business with more than 780,000,000 patients traveling abroad to receive care from foreign doctors, dentists, and hospitals.(The Mckinsey Quartely 2008.)

The reason is because even if you count in the travellers cost to certain destinations, many medical vacations are more affordable than domestic health care is in many countries. The following tables can show us an example of this difference in price.

TABLE 1. Prices for standard procedures in mid-class hospitals and clinics
(Adapted from MyMedHoliday 2013.)

No.	Procedures	Price(USD) by Countries						
		USA	UK	Australia	Thailand	India	Singapore	Malaysia
1	Face Lift	\$6,500	\$7,500	\$6,700	\$4,000	\$3,360	\$4,650	\$3,500
2	Abdominoplasty	\$7,700	\$8,000	\$8,500	\$3,500	\$3,840	\$4,500	\$4,000
3	Breast Augmentation	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$3,000	\$3,300	\$8,000	\$4,000
4	Breast lift	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$7,000	\$1,900	\$1,650	\$4,950	\$1,000
5	Breast Reduction	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$11,000	\$2,850	\$3,960	\$8,000	\$4,000
6	Buttock Lift	\$11,000	\$7,800	\$15,000	\$3,500	\$3,200	\$4,100	\$3,500
7	Thigh Lift (Bilateral)	\$7,200	\$6,500	\$6,500	\$2,200	\$3,780	\$2,550	\$4,000
8	Blepharoplasty (Upper & Lower)	\$6,000	n/a	\$3,700	\$2,150	\$2,400	n/a	n/a
9	Endoscopic Brow lift	\$5,800	\$7,200	\$6,680	n/a	\$2,760	n/a	n/a
10	Neck lift	\$6,100	n/a	n/a	\$2,100	\$2,880	\$2,100	n/a
11	Tummy Tuck	\$8,500	\$7,000	\$13,175	\$3,600	\$4,080	\$6,250	\$2,500
12	Liposuction (One Region)	\$6,100	\$6,000	\$4,000	\$3,000	\$2,100	\$3,000	\$3,000
13	Otoplasty (For prominent Ears)	\$4,700	\$5,730	\$7,000	\$1,400	\$1,800	\$900	\$2,000
14	Forehead Lift	\$11,350	\$7,250	\$6,500	\$2,200	\$1,850	\$1,500	\$1,950
15	Rhinoplasty	\$7,300	\$7,600	\$11,000	\$3,800	\$1,700	\$2,375	\$1,700
16	Tip Rhynoplasty	\$6,300	n/a	\$8,500	\$600	\$1,560	n/a	n/a
17	Upper Eyelid Surgery	\$6,900	\$4,769	\$4,000	\$375	\$900	\$1,650	\$790
18	Lower Eyelid Surgery	\$6,900	\$4,533	\$4,000	\$375	\$926	\$1,650	\$770

TABLE 2. Difference in prices (Adapted from Medical Tourism Association 2010.)

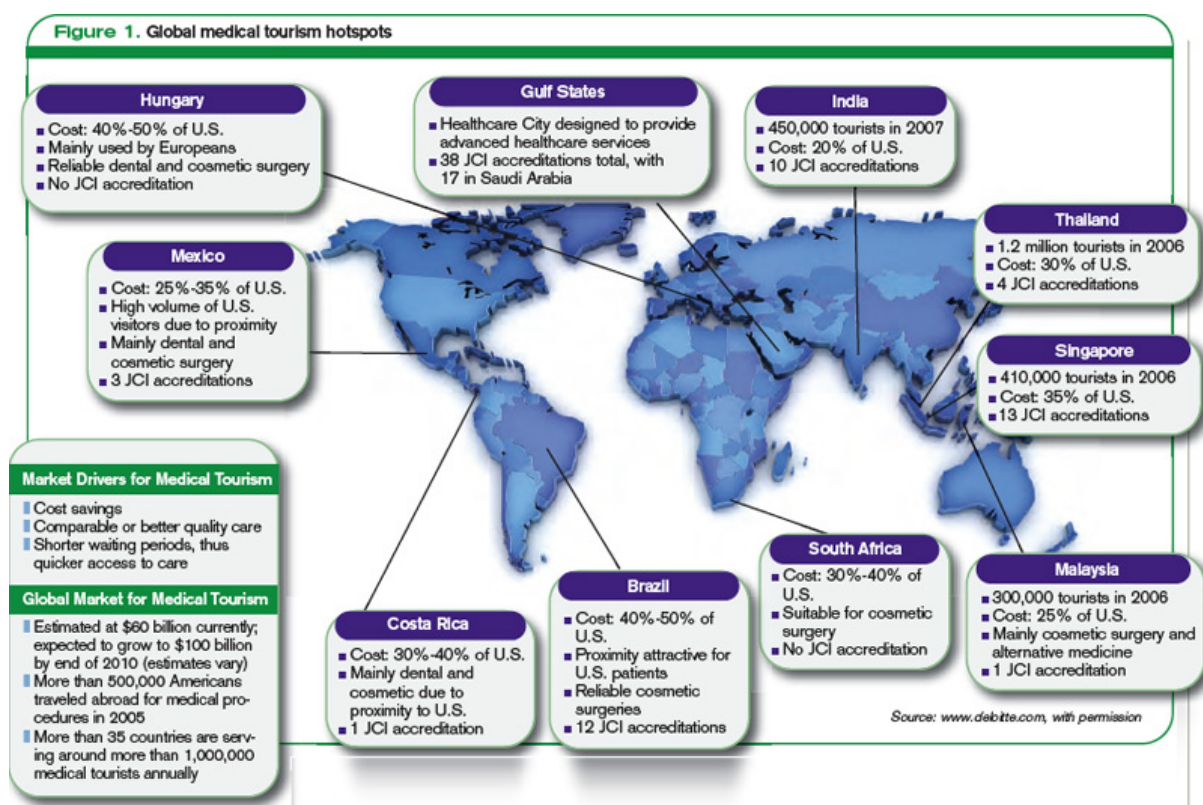
Surgery	USA	Costa Rica		India		Mexico		Thailand	
	Price	Price	Savings	Price	Savings	Price	Savings	Price	Savings
Heart Bypass	\$ 144,000	\$ 25,000	82.6%	\$ 5,200	96.4%	\$ 27,000	81.3%	\$ 15,121	89.5%
Angioplasty	\$ 57,000	\$ 13,000	77.2%	\$ 3,300	94.2%	\$ 12,500	78.1%	\$ 3,788	93.4%
Heart Valve Replacement	\$ 170,000	\$ 30,000	82.4%	\$ 5,500	96.8%	\$ 18,000	89.4%	\$ 21,212	87.5%
Hip Replacement	\$ 50,000	\$ 12,500	75.0%	\$ 7,000	86.0%	\$ 13,000	74.0%	\$ 7,879	84.2%
Hip Resurfacing	\$ 50,000	\$ 12,500	75.0%	\$ 7,000	86.0%	\$ 15,000	70.0%	\$ 15,152	69.7%
Knee Replacement	\$ 50,000	\$ 11,500	77.0%	\$ 6,200	87.6%	\$ 12,000	76.0%	\$ 12,297	75.4%
Spinal Fusion	\$ 100,000	\$ 11,500	88.5%	\$ 6,500	93.5%	\$ 12,000	88.0%	\$ 9,091	90.9%
Dental Implant	\$ 2,800	\$ 900	67.9%	\$ 1,000	64.3%	\$ 1,800	35.7%	\$ 3,636	-29.9%
Gastric Sleeve	\$ 28,700	\$ 10,500	63.4%	\$ 5,000	82.6%	\$ 9,995	65.2%	\$ 13,636	52.5%
Gastric Bypass	\$ 32,927	\$ 12,500	62.0%	\$ 5,000	84.8%	\$ 10,950	66.7%	\$ 16,667	49.4%
Lap Band	\$ 30,000	\$ 8,500	71.7%	\$ 3,000	90.0%	\$ 6,500	78.3%	\$ 11,515	61.6%
Liposuction	\$ 9,000	\$ 3,900	56.7%	\$ 2,800	68.9%	\$ 2,800	68.9%	\$ 2,303	74.4%
Tummy Tuck	\$ 9,750	\$ 5,300	45.6%	\$ 3,000	69.2%	\$ 4,025	58.7%	\$ 5,000	48.7%
Breast Implants	\$ 10,000	\$ 3,800	62.0%	\$ 3,500	65.0%	\$ 3,500	65.0%	\$ 2,727	72.7%
Rhinoplasty	\$ 8,000	\$ 4,500	43.8%	\$ 4,000	50.0%	\$ 3,500	56.3%	\$ 3,091	61.4%
Face Lift	\$ 15,000	\$ 6,000	60.0%	\$ 4,000	73.3%	\$ 4,900	67.3%	\$ 3,697	75.4%
Hysterectomy	\$ 15,000	\$ 5,700	62.0%	\$ 2,500	83.3%	\$ 5,800	61.3%	\$ 2,727	81.8%
Lasik (both eyes)	\$ 4,400	\$ 1,800	59.1%	\$ 500	88.6%	\$ 1,995	54.7%	\$ 1,818	58.7%
IVF Treatments	\$ 14,500	\$ 2,800	80.7%	\$ 3,250	77.6%	\$ 3,950	72.8%	\$ 9,091	37.3%

The table above shows that depending on the location and procedure a medical vacation can cost 50%, 30%, or even 10% of what you would pay in the U.S or Western countries. This type of differences have made tourist more interested in medical travel, making it grow to a global scale. (Hutchinson 2005.)

Medical tourism has been usually referred to cosmetic, plastic or elective surgery. However, in recent time patients are receiving more types of surgery that concern life saving cases such as heart surgery, hip replacement, cancer treatments or fertility work. Treatments that cost too much in certain western countries or that are unavailable, because of the lack of technology or still being experimental.

Thanks to better communication and marketing technology, more affordable international flights, and advances in medical science, medical tourism is growing in popularity on a global scale.

The following graph shows some examples on the leading countries that offer medical tourism. We can even see some of the specialties that these countries can offer.



GRAPH 1. Global medical tourism hotspots (adapted from The Hospitalist October 2010.)

3.1 Cosmetic treatments abroad

Only 10 to 15 years ago cosmetic treatments and advanced cosmetics surgeries were an issue for the rich, famous and odd personalities. Today situation has changed. Both the interest and acceptance for cosmetic procedures has increased. The prices have also become reachable for people with average salaries. (Bäsen, 2011, 50-52.)

In the following chapters we will focus on the medical travel specific area of cosmetic treatments abroad. We will point out the major treatments as well as their benefits and risks.

3.2 Cosmetic procedure

Cosmetic procedure is not a new concept from this century. The Hindu surgeon Sushruta described treatments in his medical papers done to patients already 500 years B.C. Surgeries that involved treatments likes nose reconstructions. The basic idea for cosmetic treatments continues today. Still the techniques for these surgeries and treatments have advanced since then. (Jeppsson, Peterson & Risberg.2001, 275.)

To know how to do safe and successful medical travel, specifically focusing on cosmetic procedures abroad, it is important to understand the benefits and advantages of doing the procedure abroad as well as the procedure itself. It is important to know if it is beneficial for the medical tourist.

The second part is to understand that when making any kind surgical treatment to the body is that it has risks, as it is still a surgery. In worst cases it is possible to be mortal.

4 BENEFITS AND ADVANTAGES OF COSMETIC PROCEDURES

There are different advantages and benefits for a cosmetic procedure itself. To understand these benefits and advantages we have to know the reason why it should be done and why it should be done abroad.

4.1 Reasons for cosmetic procedures

There can be different reasons why a person decides to undergo cosmetic procedures, but there are certain groups that receive the most benefits. These groups can be divided into three categories.

The first group of individuals can be described as those who would like to restore changes that have occurred in their body due to ageing, smoking, giving birth, nursing, weight loss and other factors in the same categories. Here belong procedures like teeth whitening, chemical peeling, face-lift, as well as other smaller procedures. These people want to look fresh and rejuvenated, but without changing the way they look. (Bäsen 2011, 36-37.)

The second group of individuals are people who want to change a small detail in their appearance that they feel is not normal or looks well. They are usually born with these features and here belong procedures like nose surgery and many breast procedures. (Bäsen 2011, 36-37.)

The last group of people who benefit from cosmetic procedures are those who have had accidents or sickness that have damaged their appearance. These people want to restore their appearance or make better than what it has been. A lot of these procedures concern people who want scars to be removed or even tattoos. (Bäsen 2011, 36-37.)

4.2 Reasons for cosmetic procedures abroad

If we start analyzing the benefits and advantages of cosmetic treatments abroad we can discover that the most common knowledge is that it offers a cheaper option for receiving medical treatments. The popularity of obtaining medical treatment by travelling abroad is influenced by several factors such as certain medical services are not available in their countries, their health insurance does not cover the full cost of a procedure or simply because of wanting to have cosmetic surgery at a more affordable price. (Bäsen 2011, 61.)

Still the low cost of medical procedures, is the number one reason why people go offshore for medical treatments. The main reason behind the low prices of medical treatments abroad is the low cost of labor in the popular medical tourism destinations. (*Thakkar 2010.*)

Another reason of benefit is that many of the doctors and surgeons that offer healthcare services to international patients are trained and certified in Western countries, such as the United States and Great Britain. Some institutes and centers are members to well known international organizations such as Joint Commission International (JCI) or National Institutes of Health (NIH) that give more assurance to the patient. (Bäsen 2011, 61-63.)

The next advantage of medical tourism is the access to the services. For those who have come from countries with public health care systems, medical tourism offers them the chance to be placed on the priority list. (Bäsen 2011, 61-63.)

The last overall benefit is that even though medical tourism is about obtaining medical care, the other part is having the opportunity to travel to another country and enjoying the stay as a vacation. Especially for those who travel because of cosmetic surgery, the relaxation after the treatment is as important as the treatment. (Bäsen 2011, 61-63.)

5 RISKS

Even though there have been great advances in surgical techniques, tools, anesthetics, pre - and postoperative procedures there are still certain risks that follow these operations. These risks increase depending of the size of the procedure as well as the age and health of the patients. (Jeppsson et al. 2001, 20.)

5.1 Risks with cosmetic procedures

When planning to undergo any kind of cosmetic procedure it is important to know that there are always short-term risks and long-term risks involved in the procedure. The failure in a procedure can some times be irreversible and that is why it is important to know what the outcome can be. In the following paragraphs we will go through some of the general risk with cosmetic procedures. (Bäsen 2011, 54-56.)

First of all it is important to know that all procedures that have the necessity to go trough the skin barrier have a greater chance of infection. The risk varies depending also on the size of the procedure. Nerves as well as muscle can be damaged through these procedures. This can make patient loose sensation in those areas that have been affected. There can be great complications during the procedure especially for people who have previous health problems or are overweight. There are also risks of allergic reactions to medicine or anesthetics than can cause problem during the procedure or after the procedure. (Bäsen 2011, 54-56.)

There is a minimal amount of lethal risks when having cosmetic procedures. The mortality risks are higher for those with health problems and are having greater procedures. Still the patients have to be aware that surgeries are often done in areas with great blood vessels and even though there are few cases, there are risks of bleeding during surgery and after surgery. (Bäsen 2011, 54-56.)

There is also a risk of not being satisfied with the procedure. The level of satisfaction is usually 80 to 90 percent only a couple of years after the procedure. Corrections, especially in surgical procedures can usually only be done after about a year.

One last thing to be aware of is that it is uncertain what the long time risks are in cosmetic procedures. This is due to the lack of scientifically long term studies and the short time of follow up after the procedure. (Bäsen 2011, 54-56.)

5.2 Risks with cosmetic procedures abroad

Cosmetic procedures abroad carry not only benefits but also risks that local provided medical care does not. The major risks in this field concern the liability of the doctors and facilities. To guarantee that the doctor has the necessary skills to do the surgery can be more difficult abroad and many travellers often do not research about this issue. Another risk that comes with medical tourism is the post-operative care that can vary dramatically, depending on the hospital and the country. (Bäsen 2011, 61-63.)

The American Dental Association consumer adviser Matt Messina told once to USA TODAY about patients risk aftercare saying:

"My concerns are not for the quality of dentistry received ... but for the patient when it comes to long-term follow-up and possible complications....'buyer beware' is very much in play here, as you may have fewer options after treatment if you feel it has not gone well."
(Marklein 2005.)

The after treatment or follow up of the surgery is as important as the surgery itself and is very difficult to do when the doctor resides abroad. This involves also the issue of complaint for malpractice that becomes harder or almost impossible sometimes because of the distance. Industry specialists also counsel that the main areas of risk lie in travel complications. Travelling immediately after surgery can increase the risk of complications. The American Society of Plastic Surgeons

(ASPS) warns that long flights can increase the risk of developing pulmonary embolism and blood clots, and suggests waiting five to seven days after bodily procedures and seven to 10 days after aesthetic surgery on the face, before flying. (American Society of Plastic Surgeons 2010.)

5.3. Cosmetic surgery abroad gone wrong

"Hours later, the surgeon finally saw Tyra, but only for five minutes. "He could barely speak English, and as he drew all over my gown indicating things about my procedures, I worried he may not have fully understood what we'd discussed," she says. "I felt a little panicked, but I'd already come all this way and paid my money so I went through with it."

Today, the attractive brunette wishes she'd cut her losses and left. The surgeon botched every single procedure; where her tummy should be flat, there's now a huge bulge caused by damaged muscles; where she just wanted a few centimeters trimmed off her thighs, the skin is now uneven and lumpy. And her new breasts? "They look freakish," says Tyra, tearfully. "The nipples are so high they sit above the top of my bra. I can barely look in the mirror." (Osfield 2010.)

In this article you can see an example of a treatment and aftercare gone wrong. The after treatment or follow up of the surgery is as important as the surgery itself and is very difficult when the doctor resides abroad. This case affected the patient both physically and economically as it does for a great percentage of the cases of procedures that had a wrong outcome.

The safety risks are not only external but also internal as there are different infectious disease-related epidemiology that is not that common in Western countries. These kinds of exposures can in certain cases be even fatal. (Freeland 2006.)

This shows the safety problems concerning and increasing in medical tourism, especially cosmetic surgery.

6 AWARENESS AND PREVENTION

In 2010, the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeon made a survey with the members reporting severe wound infections and tissue loss. In one case the stitches had not been removed from a facelift patient. By doing the survey there was also found that 14% of members had seen nine or more patients in the past year alone with problems as a result of cheap cosmetic surgery abroad. Even 44% had seen at least three to five cases. (International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ISAPS) 2006.

The surgeons' main concerns were the aftercare and language barriers that would give lower quality standards or would not understand the procedures. Some of the cases reported flying too soon after surgery, severe infections. (Boseley 2007.)

The survey also showed that there was not a special country to blame but that patients had surgery in different countries ranging from Eastern Europe through to Asia. (Boseley 2007.)

The best way to avoid risks and complications during medical travel is to have as much information as possible about the destination, clinic or hospital and the doctors who will be treating you. When choosing a foreign provider for medical procedures, it is important that these hospitals and facilities comply with international standards and practices.

It is possible to look for this information by viewing their websites, obtaining literature and brochures about the establishment, or coordinating with medical intermediaries to obtain information they have on a particular facility. The more information you can get, the more secure the trip will become. (Gahlinger 2008.)

To know the clinic or hospital as well as the doctor and staff that will be treating you it is essential information to have a secure and successful procedure. There are many good surgeons and experts on the matter, but with the increase and expansion of the branch as well as the high lucratively has brought individuals with no experience or education to offer these kinds of procedures. (Bäsen 2011, 57.)

6.1 Choosing hospitals and doctors

When choosing hospital and doctor it is important to know who is going to take care of you, where and in what conditions. To be able to answer to any concern or inquirer it is essential to do thorough research on the clinic and the doctor that is going to be chosen.

The first thing to do is to start reviewing the clinic's website as well as ordering information home. When getting all the information it has to be reviewed from an objective point of view, this is to be able value the risks and what is offer from each clinic or doctor. In the following points we will go through what kind of research needs to be done and questions need to answered before choosing a facility or specialist. (Bäsen 2011, 57.)

6.2 Education and experience

When researching, it is important to choose a doctor that has a certified education. It is important to be aware that today a doctor does not need to have a specialization in cosmetic procedures to have the permission to work in the branch. Apart from the required medical education, to receive a certification to be able call yourself a specialist in the branch it requires a least five more years of education and you have to be certified by national or international medical authorities. (Bäsen 2011, 58-60.)

When the education has been certified it is important to receive information about the experience, style as well as the orientation that the doctor or staff at a clinic has. The experience of the doctor and staff can be crucial for a successful procedure. Knowing that the doctor and staff have done many successful procedures of the same type will give reassurance. A doctor that does not have experience in the procedures that may be requested should recommend to another doctor with more experience in the matter. (Bäsen 2011, 58-60.)

The orientation and style that the doctor or staff uses will also affect the result of

the procedures. It is important to know what is the opinion of the doctor about certain procedures and in which way he has performed surgery. It is always good to ask for before and after surgery pictures as well as references of people that have been treated. (Bäsen 2011, 58-60.)

6.3 Standard and reputation

When choosing the clinic and doctor it is important to research about the standard as well as the reputation that they have. The standard concerns staff and resources that are offered in the clinic where the procedure is going to be made. It is important to know that the clinic offers a high standard in technical resources and prepared staff if any complication were to occur. This also involves the after treatment and responsibility that the clinic takes if there would be any complications or a mistake has been done. (Bäsen 2011, 58-60.)

Finally, it is good to know the reputation of the clinic and doctor. The recommendation has to come from certified people in the industry of health, media or cosmetic industry. It is important to remember to be critical on where the source of information has come from and if it has any connection to the clinic or doctor. (Bäsen 2011, 58-60.)

It is always important to confirm if the claims are correct and the most important questions would be in safety and risks. To know the outcomes of the surgery, the experience of the doctor or knowing if the facility and doctor has had malpractice claims. (Bäsen 2011, 58-60.)

It is good to have patience when doing this type of research. Established and certified doctors as well as clinics may cost more or have longer waiting lists. But it is recommended to take time to be able to receive the right treatment. (Bäsen 2011, 58-60.)

6.4 Accreditations

There are certain medical accreditation organizations that can be looked for when choosing a hospital or medical facility. If the medical facility and doctor is a member certified by international or national accreditations this will confirm its competence as well as credibility. In the following paragraphs we will go shortly through some medical accreditation organizations and bodies. (Bäsen 2011, 62.)

First we have the Joint Commission international (JCI) that is the leading medical accreditation organization for medical facilities in the US and across the globe. They oversee that its members will meet the standards required and their staff are certified to make the required procedures to the patients involved. Having a certified accreditation from the organization, gives the expectation of a high quality medical facility and staff. (Joint Commission international 2013)

Second we have the International Society for Quality in Health Care (ISQua). This global organization has its origins back in 1985. Has an International accreditation program that involves in taking care of the accreditation of national and regional health care facilities worldwide. (International Society for Quality in Health Care 2013)

Another organization is the European Society for Quality in Healthcare (ESQH). Is a non-profit organization dedicated to oversee improvements of quality in European health care. This organization consists of 19 members from different countries belonging to their national societies for quality in healthcare. (European Society for Quality in Healthcare 2013)

Two more international organizations are the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ISAP). The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) was founded in 1947. This organization is the worlds largest organization to take care voluntary the reviewing and rating of international standards in products, services, practices

and facilities. (International Organization for Standardization 2013)

Finally, the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ISAP) was founded in 1970, this organization that focuses on keeping high standards and development in the surgical field and has high requirements from its member, it oversees that the members will follow the ethics and standards that the organization stands for. (International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery 2013)

7 PLANNING FOR SURGERY ABROAD

When planning to have cosmetic surgery abroad that is combined with a vacation, it is recommended to plan for the different steps that the traveller will need to go through. There will be three major phases that involve consultation with the doctor and facilities, the surgery itself and lastly the after treatments as well as check ups.

If a travel agency takes care of the package or trip, it is important not to let all contact with the clinic or doctor be taken care of by them. In the following chapters we will go through some important factors that should be brought up in the different phases when having surgery abroad.

7.1 Consultation

When enough research has been done and the travellers or patients have decided which facility and doctors they will use to do their cosmetic procedure, it is recommended to begin to go through the first phase of the procedure.

The first phase of consultation should begin with the opportunity to talk to the staff and doctor before travelling to the country or region. The patient should confirm that the staff and doctor that is going to take care of them speak fluent English or a language that both the patient and staff can understand well. It is important to be understood in all the phases of the surgery and can be crucial to have a successful procedure as well as recovery. (Bäsen 2011, 62-64.)

When the consultation starts at the clinic where the procedure is going to be made it is good to be prepared as the time can be limited. It should be asked as much questions as possible concerning the doctor, staff, clinic and procedure. Where you will stay after the procedure and what kind of service you will receive is good information to know to give reassurance for your recovery. (Bäsen 2011, 62-64.)

A good preparation is to bring a notebook with questions ready and also write down the answers from the doctor. As it can be a sensitive matter or make one nervous it is recommend bringing a friend along as support and in case of forgetting to ask important questions. (Bäsen 2011, 62-64.)

As mentioned before, it is important that there is no lack of communication as it can be one of the major causes of procedures gone wrong. To be as clear as possible on what type of procedure is wanted or what kind of result is wanted is also important in this phase. (Bäsen 2011, 62-64.)

To make it easier for both the patient and doctor to understand what kind of result is wanted it is a good idea to bring photos that have similar result of what is wanted. (Bäsen 2011, 62-64.)

In the consultation phase it is necessary to fill out basic information on one's health state and why this procedure is needed. The doctor shall also clarify how the procedure will go and what are the risks of the procedure. This shall always be asked in a written statement so that it is possible to have a look at it in private and ask further questions if needed. (Bäsen 2011, 62-64.)

7.2 The procedure itself

When the time for the procedure has come the patient will be given sedation. Before this phase it is important that the staff has confirmed the identity of the patient and has gone through once more what procedure is going to be done. The patient has to have a clear understanding of what is going to be done and who is going to do the procedure, this would be the reason of doing before sedation. (Jeppsson et al. 2001, 63.)

When the patient is in the operation room the area of procedure should be sterilized and the surrounding areas covered with sterilized blankets, this will help to prevent infections. In time of procedure there should be a specialized surgeon,

an assisting surgeon as well depending on the procedure, an anesthetic nurse and an assistant nurse. It is good to go through this as well during consultation to be reassured on what is going to be arranged. (Bäsen 2011, 78.)

7.3 The time after the procedure

The time after the procedure is needed for recovery, as any cosmetic procedure will require strength and energy. It is important to see that adequate instructions for care and after treatment are given. When combining cosmetic surgery and vacations these instructions shall also be given to the staff that will take care of the recovery. (Bäsen 2011, 80-81.)

If there has gone something wrong with the procedure or there is dissatisfaction, the patient shall immediately inform the doctor. This will give the opportunity for correction as in most cases the doctor and clinic will want to have good reputation concerning their procedures. There can also be some cases where the doctor or staff will not come to an agreement with the patient nor will they want to recognize medical mistakes. In these cases it is important to be quickly in contact with own insurance company as well as medical authorities in the area. (Bäsen 2011, 80-81.)

It can be difficult to get compensation from insurance companies because of dissatisfaction with the result of the procedure. But when there has been a medical error or a breach in the contract that was made with a clinic the chances are higher for the insurance company to help in the matter. If the situation becomes more difficult and is taken to court it is essential to have had written statements on what has been promised by doctors and the clinic. (Bäsen 2011, 80-81.)

Travel and activities that involve great strength should not be done until a couple of weeks after the procedure. Specifically when travelling back by airplane from abroad a medical certificate should be filled out and signed by the doctor stating the passengers fit to travel. In the following graph we will see an example of a medical certificate that is given by Finnair airline company.


[Pdf-instruction](#)
[Reset Form](#)
MEDIF
Standard medical information form for
air travel

Page 1

The Sales office, agent or passenger should complete this form.

Please answer all of the questions, marking an 'x' in the 'Yes' or 'No' boxes and using block letters or typing when completing the form.

1. Passenger's first name		Last name		Date of birth	Gender
2. Proposed itinerary: date(s), flight number(s), from-to					
3. Diagnosis or other reason for special arrangements					
4. Is the passenger able to walk 50 meters (55 yards) without breathing difficulties? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No, specify _____					
5. Is a wheelchair needed? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, WCHR – wheelchair to the gate <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, WCHS – wheelchair to the aircraft door <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, WCHC – wheelchair to the aircraft seat			Weight and measurements of the wheelchair <input type="checkbox"/> Passenger's own wheelchair <input type="checkbox"/> Foldable wheelchair <input type="checkbox"/> Motorized wheelchair <input type="checkbox"/> Spillable batteries <input type="checkbox"/> Non-spillable batteries Permission for transport of a motorized wheelchair must always be obtained from the airline in advance.		
6. Is an ambulance needed? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes If yes, specify name and telephone number of ambulance company and name of hospital at destination					
7. Are other ground arrangements needed? Note! Finnair does not provide any ground arrangements. <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes If yes, specify below contact information of persons and organisations requested to assist Assistance to the aircraft at airport of departure <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, specify _____ Assistance between flights <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, specify _____ Assistance on arrival at destination <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, specify _____ Other assistance or valuable information <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, specify _____					
8. Are any special in-flight arrangements needed, such as extra seat or special equipment? See Note 2 at the bottom of Page 2. <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, specify at MEDA11-MEDA12 on page 2.					
9. Is a stretcher needed onboard? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes. An escort with a medical training is required.					
10. Name, age and qualifications of medically trained escort. If the escort has no medical training, write "Travel companion" and the person's name.					
11. If the passenger is deaf and/or blind, is he or she being escorted by a trained dog? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes					
This text should be read by or to the passenger, dated and signed by him or her or on his or her behalf.					
I hereby authorise all physicians and hospitals to provide the airlines with the information required by these airlines' medical departments, for the purpose of determining my fitness for carriage by air. I therefore relieve these physicians of their vow of professional secrecy in respect to such information and agree to pay the physicians' fees in this matter. I am aware that, if accepted for carriage, my journey will be subject to the General Conditions of Carriage and the conditions of tariffs of the carriers concerned, and that the carriers do not assume any special liability exceeding these conditions. I am prepared, at my own risk, to bear any consequences which carriage by air may have on my state of health, and I release the carriers, their employees, servants and agents from any liability for such consequences. I agree to reimburse the carriers upon demand for any special expenditures or costs in connection with my carriage.					
Passenger's or guardian's phone number and e-mail address					
Place and date			Passenger's or guardian's signature		

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8 CONCLUSIONS

Trough the research done for this report it has come an understanding that the majority of travellers and those who are to become medical travellers need to have a necessary knowledge on the subject to be able to minimize risks during cosmetic surgery abroad. Being this case, it is essential to have a medical travel guide to help tourist to acquire a highly qualitative and secure procedure in facilities abroad.

The medical tourism business is increasing for every year and the demand from western countries' customers for vacation combined with cosmetic surgery or health treatment is on the rise. This report also helped understand that the high amount of the risk that comes with medical travel can be prevented by searching for the background and information of the destination, facility and those who will take part in the procedure.

There were some difficulties while searching for information about the subject, as the study of modern medical tourism is a young subject. This subject can further be researched and should be updated after certain time periods to ensure the best outcome for this type of guide. To finalize the conclusion some major points that I have summarized and believe are an adequate guideline for medical travel and cosmetic procedures abroad, will be brought up.

First of all I believe that the information is the key to awareness and prevention of risks during cosmetic procedures abroad. To find out as much information as possible concerning the doctor, facilities as well as procedure is essential. A good way to start is before any choice of procedure to ask your own domestic doctor the risks and benefits.

Secondly, you should not let all contact be handled by the travel agency. Be in contact with the doctor or facilities before travelling. When doing this it is important to be assured that the staff and doctor are able to communicate with you in a common language. Another important matter is to always ask for written

statements before and after the procedure. This will help in case of anything going wrong or you feel that the outcome was not as promised.

Finally, it is important to take your time with every step and never feel stressed or pressured. Any kind of surgery abroad or domestic shall not be made in hurry. This should be thought about carefully as surgery is something that can have strong repercussion on your body.

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