

## The Role of Health Tourism in Enhancing the Quality of Life and Cultural Transmission in Developing Countries

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**Abstract**—Medical tourism or travel therapy is travelling from one country to another to be under medical treatment, utilizing the health factors of natural sector like mineral water springs and so on. From 1990s medical tourism around the world developed and grew because of different factors like globalization and free trade in the fields of health services, changes in exchange rates in the world economy (which caused the desirability of Asian countries as a medical tourist attraction) in a way that currently there is a close competition in this field among famous countries in medical services to make them find a desirable place in medical tourism market of the world as a complicated and growing industry in a short time. Perhaps tourism is an attractive industry and a good support for the economy of Iran, if we try to merge oil earnings and tourism industry it would be better and more constructive than putting them in front of each other. Moving from oil toward tourism economy especially medical tourism, must be one of the prospects of Iran's government for the oil industry to provide a few percent of the yearly earnings of the country. Among the achievements in medical tourism we can name the prevention of brain drain to other countries and an increase in employment rate for healthcare staff, increase in foreign exchange earnings of the country because of the tourists' staying and followed by increasing the quality of life and cultural transmission as well as empowering the medical human resources.

**Keywords**—Developing countries, health tourism, quality of life, cultural transmission.

### I. INTRODUCTION

BASED on the definition provided by the world tourism organization (WTO), one of the goals which can direct the travel motivation in tourists is traveling for health. Iran's share from tourism industry and tourists is 11% of the world's economy and this value is less than 5% of the nation's currency earnings. Iran's oil earnings are the major important factor which represents the amount of Iran's economy influence from global economy. On the other hand, because of the dollar value of Iran's oil earnings, any reduction in the dollar value means a reduction in the real value of oil earnings. In addition, oil price increase is the only factor of its economical growth, so by the increase in global oil prices and development of oil earnings, the interest in making

improvements in tourism industry reduces significantly[1].

Medical tourism (MT) is patient movement from highly developed nations to other areas of the world for medical care, usually to find treatment at a lower cost. Medical tourism is different from the traditional model of international medical travel where patients generally journey from less developed nations to major medical centers in highly developed countries for medical treatment that is unavailable in their own communities [1],[2].

Services typically sought by travelers include elective procedures as well as complex specialized surgeries such as joint replacement (knee/hip), cardiac surgery, dental surgery, and cosmetic surgeries. Individuals with rare genetic disorders may travel to another country where treatment of these conditions is better understood. However, virtually every type of health care, including psychiatry, alternative treatments, convalescent care and even burial services are available. Over 50 countries have identified medical tourism as a national industry [3].

In Europe Belgium, Poland, Slovakia, and Ukraine are also breaking into the business. South Africa is taking the term "medical tourism" very literally by promoting their "medical safaris" [4].

A specialized subset of medical tourism is reproductive tourism and reproductive outsourcing,[1] which is the practice of traveling abroad to undergo in-vitro fertilization, surrogate pregnancy and other assisted reproductive technology treatments including freezing embryos for retro-production [5],[6].

The responsibility for providing mental health care is falling increasingly to primary care providers. This may reflect both the treatment preferences of many Americans and the availability and affordability of health care services. Well over half of treated patients now receive some form of primary care for their mental disorder, mostly from a primary care doctor, and primary care is now the sole form of health care used by over one-third of patients with a mental disorder accessing the health care system[7].

As health care reform focuses on a central role for primary care in the delivery and coordination of health care services, especially for the chronically ill, it is timely to consider how mental health services could be better integrated into primary care, and how the implementation of health care reforms could optimally deliver this.

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