

Medical Tourism in Asia: Health Asia with Enhanced Earning Capacity

By Naoyuki Haraoka

Health is an important asset for human beings. Without it, we cannot be happy. In today's globalized world, we can travel to any country to find the best medical treatment for any specific disease. This could result in not only better health for the individual but also greater wealth for the countries involved, as these opportunities for medical treatment could be combined with tourism. The combined business of health care and tourism could be a big business in our aging societies.

This issue of *Japan SPOTLIGHT* highlights ways to achieve this for Japan in collaboration with the rest of the world. Close international collaboration and communication could also work to mitigate geopolitical crises. As usual, following the Roundtable discussion among experts on this theme, we have articles on a wide range of issues related to medical tourism.

Medical Excellence Japan (MEJ), a core organization promoting medical tourism in Japan, is introduced by Kayoko Beppu, head of its Business Department, explaining about its mission, tasks, and future plans, while an interview with Yong Yih Ming, CEO of Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore, reveals best practices in one of the most well-developed countries for medical tourism. A further interview with Prof. Junichi Sasaki, vice director of Keio University Hospital, and Kazuhisa Suzuki, administrative director of the hospital, gives evidence of its experience in accepting

foreign patients and offers lessons for the internationalization of Japanese hospitals.

India is another Asian country that has made good progress in medical tourism and is well-known for its unique methods of treatment called Ayurveda. Our editorial committee member Mohan Gopal discusses the potential of Indo-Japanese medical tourism, an issue also highlighted in the subsequent article by Dr. Soumya Chandrasekhar, an Indian medical consultant, which showcases a roadmap for the two nations' collaboration.

Travel agencies are also expected to play a key role in promoting medical tourism and in creating the "industrialization" of hospitals and health care. Takanori Matsushima, a senior official at JTB Corp., one of the most successful Japanese travel agencies, talks about JTB's experience as a frontrunner in Japanese medical tourism.

This issue will help to clarify the potential of Japanese medical tourism and the challenges that lie ahead in turning this potential into reality.

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