**Why You Should Have Medical / Cosmetic Procedures in the UK Rather Than Using Medical Tourism**

**Introduction to medical and cosmetic procedures:**

**Medical procedures** refer to processes used to monitor, measure, diagnose, and treat medical diseases. These procedures can either be invasive (requiring surgery) or non-invasive.

The **cosmetic procedures** are those procedures which help in changing your body. These procedures include alteration, restoration, and reconstruction of the human body.

A list of medical and cosmetic procedures is as follows:

* Dentistry (reconstruction, teeth whitening and cosmetic procedures)
* Orthopaedic procedures or surgery (spinal fusion, joint surgery, joints resurfacing, knee and hip replacement surgeries)
* Tissue, organs, and cells transplantation surgeries (stem cells and organ transplantation)
* Retinal or eye surgeries
* Cardiac surgeries (angioplasty, valve replacement surgeries, by-pass)
* Reproductive system and fertility (gender reassignment, in vitro fertilisation – IVF)
* Bariatric surgeries (gastric-banding, gastric by-pass)
* Check-ups and diagnostic procedures
* Botox (injections for more beautiful and wrinkle-free face)
* Breasts augmentation (mastectomy)
* Rhinoplasty (changings in nose shape, nose job)
* Liposuction (removal of extra body fat, tummy tuck)
* Hair transplants

**What is medical tourism?**

Medical tourism can be defined as an approach used by consumers and patients for travelling abroad (internationally) to receive medical treatment or cosmetic procedures. These treatments most frequently include:

* Cosmetic surgeries
* Dental care
* Elective surgeries
* Treatments for fertility

**Prevalence of medical tourism:**

According to researches in the year 2010, about 63,000 of the population travelled abroad (outside the UK) to clinics and hospitals in other countries for medical procedures in comparison to 52,000 people who came into the UK.

**Reasons for medical tourism:**

There are different factors which account for medical tourism, which includes:

* Cost-effective (less cost of treatment in other countries)
* Incapability or unavailability of services in the country of origin
* Avoidance of long waiting time for procedures.

**Why should UK citizens get their procedures in the UK?**

The UK is one of the most developed countries in the world with high-tech and advanced:

* Diagnostic
* Prognostic
* Interventional technologies.

According to the research published in the [*Annals of Surgery*,](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1856601/) there has been an innovation in the field of surgery in the UK in comparison to previous years. Therefore, it is recommended for UK citizens to get their medical procedures inside their country rather than moving to other countries.

NHS (National Health Services), UK, provides the best, up-to-date, and the most innovative treatment approaches to patients and clients to meet their needs and improve the quality of their life.

Avoidance of medical tourism can significantly benefit and prevent patients from different issues related to medical tourism.

A few of the issues are listed below.

1. **Issues related to informed consent and pre-counselling:**

Regarding medical tourism, issues related to informed consent and pre-counselling can occur. Patients might be going through some comorbidities and illnesses (pre-existing) such as HIV diseases, cardiopulmonary and respiratory diseases, renal failure, cardiovascular insufficiency, diabetes mellitus or patients might have taken some specific medications before travelling. Pre-operative counselling is the most needed factor for such patients, which can only be possible if a health care provider knows about the complete medical history of the patient.

According to different researches (Pennings, 2004, Barclay, 2009, Jeevan et al., 2011), in the UK, the best practice is to get informed consent before medical procedures (elective procedures). This standard of management ensures that patients are informed about the benefits and side-effects before undergoing a specific treatment. This standard also allows patients to have an opportunity of asking questions regarding their condition and seeking answers for them.

In some case, this opportunity might not be available in settings of medical tourism and might cause patients to regret short-comings in clinical and professional practices.

1. **The occurrence of infectious outbreaks:**

According to research conducted by(Newman et al., 2005) on US citizens’ medical tourism, an author found acquired cases of hepatitis B after cardiac surgeries and renal transplants being performed.

(Canales et al., 2006) observed inadequate information for communication-related to pre and post-operative information of immune-suppressive regimens.

The most significant and potential hazard observed is the transfer of micro-organisms from different areas of the world. In 2009, the same case of North American- Swine Flu epidemic was being found from the US and Mexico, showing how efficiently and easily these micro-organisms can spread from one person to rest of the population.

1. **Differences of ecosystems:**

Medical travellers tend to travel from their respective countries with different disease profiles and ecosystems, which might make them susceptible to encountering and spreading diseases like dengue, malaria, and multiple other infections (water-borne, arthropod-borne).

1. **Long-distanced travelling:**

Travelling across different countries requires “flying” most of the times. Long-flights can cause pressure differences, which may cause hemostatic disturbances and complications related to health. Aged and fragile patients are relatively on a higher risk of encountering these problems. That’s why it is recommended for the patients to get treated in their respective countries.

1. **Liability and safety:**

Usually, during international appointments, a meeting between patient and doctor is not conducted, which might lead to some confusion. Whereas, sometimes, the company or a hospital proposes two-visits,

* One for the qualification, diagnosis, and to make a patient familiar with the country’s customs and medical staff members.
* The second visit to get your treatment done

As this “two-visits” proposal is beneficial concerning security and safety, but it can put an extra burden on a patient’s pocket.

Other than it, some of the online, hospitals’ websites show data and charges exclusive of a rehabilitation program, anesthesiologists’ assistance, implants or prosthesis cost, and stay in the hospital. These issues can cause many problems during your stay in another country and cause a great shock to your finance.

1. **Quality certification and insurance policy:**

Another disadvantage or issue related to medical tourism is the lack of:

* Certification of quality
* Policies of insurance

As the different countries work on various policies and standards so, it becomes significantly difficult for a patient to get accustomed to these new policies and regulation and benefit from them.

1. **Language problems:**

In most of the countries, the medium of communication for doctors and medical staff members in English. However, in some states, English is considered to be the second language, and most communication occurs in some different language. This issue can sometimes lead to a communication gap. As excellent communication is a key to progress, therefore, lack of communication can end-up in patient’s dissatisfaction and poor prognosis due to the incomprehensibility of precautionary guidelines.

1. **Paperwork:**

Paperwork is another burden put on the medical traveller as these travels require complete care of medical records, forms, plane tickets and many other documents which always requires a person (either a family member or a companion) to help you keep the documents safe and assist you in taking care of legal and constitutional matters.

1. **Follow-ups:**

Most of the medical procedures require follow-ups to:

* Check the direction of prognosis
* Minimise the risk of complications.

These follow-ups require a visit to hospitals and clinics, but if you are travelling outside your country, you will expect a long-stay and even absence of follow-ups because sometimes, follow-ups are organised following a long-time after surgery.

1. **Complications:**

As the UK is among the most developed countries of the world, so, travel to the comparatively less advanced country can be associated with less quality of care, which can lead to several complications. In the UK, health practitioners work on the highest standards of health and care, but these standards are not followed around the globe.

Other than complications associated with medical care, travelling just after undergoing the primary medical procedure can cause deep vein thrombosis DVT and blood clotting.

**Conclusion:**

With increasing concerns about health and aesthetic sense, people are more inclined towards getting surgeries to cope with their problems. Medical tourism has been observed to be emerging, lately. The UK has found to be significantly affected by medical tourism in the last few years with more people travelling abroad than people travelling in. Because of the advancements and researches in the UK, regarding the medical field, it is recommended for the citizens of UK to get their problems cured within the country rather than travelling to other parts of the world and facing additional issues and encountering complications.

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