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## The International Patient's Portfolio and Marketing of Turkish Health Tourism

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### Abstract

Health tourism is the name given to the travel of individuals from their residences to other places with the purpose of receiving treatment. Turkey has great potential for medical tourism with its geographical location, climate, thermal resources, natural beauties and qualified medical personnel. Health tourism has developed so rapidly during the last 20 years. In this research, a subgroup of health tourism practices done by the patients undergoing surgery in Turkey is discussed. Within this scope, the economic dimensions and marketing of medical tourism, the place of Turkey in the world market, the advantages and disadvantages of the country and the areas that need improvement; are examined. This research paper is prepared to investigate the necessary medical tourism improvements which can be conducted in both public and private sector in our country.

*Key words: Medical Tourism, Medical Tourism in Turkey, The Economic Dimension of Medical Tourism.*

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### 1. Introduction

Health tourism is the name given to the travel of individuals from their residences to other places with the purpose of receiving treatment. In another words, health tourism is performed for either the continuity

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of wellbeing or treatment (Boz, 2004). At the last decade, health tourism also involves to the travel to the other countries.

Being health cost high, having difficulties at social security system, rapidly increasing in geriatric population in developed countries and improvement in comfortable travelling technologies are starting point of health tourism. Development at the health care information technologies makes the information easily reachable. Therefore, people can learn “who does what” world widely and make their own choice (The McKinsey Health care Report, 2008).

Parallel to the developments at the health tourism, many new health centers are established, but also radical changes are done at the previous centers. Besides geriatric people, also general population who want to benefit from the new technologies and cheaper treatment involve in health tourism. Thermal tourism, plastic surgery, hair implantation and ophthalmic surgery were the main issues for health tourism (Kostak, 2007).

#### *Health care provided with Health Tourism*

‘Medical Tourism’ is the name given to the travel of individuals from their residences to other places with the purpose of receiving treatment. Services given with health tourism are;

- For improvement at physical and medical status of patients (springwater, herbal therapy, massage, etc.)
- For treatment of diseases plastic and esthetic surgery, cardiovascular surgery, eye surgery, oncological surgery, etc.)
- For rehabilitation (hemodialysis, dependency program, geriatric dispensaries, etc.)

In Turkey, Ministry of Development is responsible from the planning and encouragement of health tourism. Ministry of Culture and Tourism is responsible from accommodation, officers regulate the rule, lead to patients and employers in health tourism sector and control them. Ministry of Health is responsible from establishment of hospitals, dispensaries, spring water etc., education of healthcare providers and their employing, control of system ([www.saglik.gov.tr](http://www.saglik.gov.tr)).

## **2. Material and Method**

We obtained data, related to medical tourism in one-year period during 2010, from the record of the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Culture and Tourism ([www.saglik.gov.tr](http://www.saglik.gov.tr); [www.ozelhastaneler.org.tr](http://www.ozelhastaneler.org.tr)).

#### *Patients demographic features*

Patients’ nationality, hospital choosed by patients demographic features of the patients were obtained.

#### *Hospital capacities*

Number of hospitals and bed-capacities were recorded at 2010.

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