

This god, asklepios. f.
pidauria is thus the



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This was the sanctuary of the healing god, Asklepios. F. Pidauria is thus the original travel destination for medical tourism. Travel to spa towns and sanitariums can also be regarded as an early form of medical tourism. In eighteenth century England, many people visited spas which were known for their health-giving mineral waters, which could supposedly treat diseases from gout to liver disorders and bronchitis. Many factors have contributed to the popularity of medical travel. They include the high cost of health care, long waiting periods for certain procedures, the ease and affordability of international travel, and improvements in technology and standards of care in many countries.

Medical tourists can come from any country. Many of them are citizens of Europe, the UK, Middle East, Japan, the United States, and Canada. Large populations, comparatively more wealth, high cost of medical treatment or lack of health care options locally are features of these countries. Around 750, 000 Americans went abroad for health care in 2007.

As the numbers keep growing, US health care providers could lose billions of dollars worth of revenue. Convenience and speed make medical travel attractive. Countries which provide public health-care systems like the UK are often so taxed that it can take a long time to get non-urgent medical care. For instance, it might take several months to get fillings done on teeth. A hip replacement surgery can have a waiting time of a year or more in Britain and Canada. But in New Zealand, Costa Rica, Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand, Cuba, Colombia, Philippines or India, the patient can be operated on the day after their arrival. India's medical tourism sector is expected to experience an annual growth rate of 30%. This will make it a Rs.

9, 500-crore industry by 2015. Low costs, latest medical technologies and international quality standards make India a popular destination for medical tourists. As English is widely spoken in India, language is not a problem either. The cost of treatment in India may be as low as one-tenth the cost of comparable treatment in America or Britain.

Alternative therapies like Ayurveda, bone-marrow transplant, cardiac bypass, eye surgery and hip replacement are the treatments that are commonly sought by medical tourists to India. Chennai, the capital of Tamilnadu, has been declared India's Health Capital, as it nets in 45% of health tourists from abroad and 30-40% of domestic health tourists.