



Clinic/Hospital Check List

The following is a brief guide for medical travelers on how to check and select a medical clinic or hospital abroad.

First Things First

The first step in selecting an international medical service is gathering as much information as possible about the clinic or hospital. This is easily done by visiting websites, and Facebook pages. Be sure to check for online reviews and any comments that are made. You can expand this by also searching for the name of the doctors that are at these locations. The more you know, the more prepared you will be.

Do not forget to check the visa requirements for the destination country. Is a medical tourism visa possible, what is involved. Is the visa long enough to cover the treatment time. Is an extension to your visa allowed if needed? What other options are available?.

Hospital Accreditation and Affiliation

One of the best ways to ease your mind when traveling for medical procedures is to check for accreditation of your preferred hospital or clinic. The biggest accreditation body at present is the Joint Commission International (JCI). Please check if your clinic or hospital is accredited and if that accreditation is up to date.

That is not to say that you might not choose a clinic or hospital without JCI approval, but it is an important consideration.

The International Standards Organization (ISO) is another organization that provides accreditation approval based on international standards of quality and procedures. Also you would want to check that your clinic or hospital is approved by the local government.

Some clinics and hospitals are affiliated with International Hospitals and Universities. These affiliations will help you to feel safer.

Amenities

Many overseas hospitals are similar to grand hotels, they offer amenities that you will not see in public hospital systems in the west, and or in many parts of the world. From shopping arcades to fast food franchises, and private rooms that look like and indeed are hotel suites.

Many hospitals have medical tourism packages that they put together with their medical procedures. So, you will be able to relax and enjoy your stay with everything covered from the beginning. Packages with neighboring resorts may also be available.

An all-inclusive medical tourism package may be the easiest way to achieve your goals. These packages will include pick up from the airport and delivery too and from your hotel.

Hospital / Clinic Facilities and Services

Always ask the following basic questions of your medical provider:

- Where will the procedure take place? In a private hospital or at a doctor's clinic?
- What are the credentials of my medical service provider?
- Do they have a crash cart in case of emergencies?
- What kind of rooms do they have available? Are there private rooms, suites?
- Is there an intensive care unit? If the procedure takes place in a doctor's clinic, is it located near a hospital with an intensive care unit available?
- Do they maintain cooperative relationships with hospital facilities in my home country?
- Do they have the latest electronic and medical diagnostic equipment?
- Do they offer appropriate pharmaceuticals that meet FDA standards?
- Is the specialized medical equipment necessary for the type of surgery or medical procedure that you require available? Is there backup equipment available if needed?
- Were there any reported cases of post operative infection recently? What was the cause? What were the infection rates?

Quality and Consistency

Ask the hospital or clinic to provide you with the statistics that they have available on the procedure that you are considering. What is their success rate? Are these statistics available on their website? If not why not?

Have there been any complications? If so, what steps have been taken to ensure that it does not happen again?

Care during Treatments

The main benefit of medical tourism is cost saving. Getting a medical procedure done for less than the cost at home allows you to combine a vacation with the treatment often for less than the cost of doing it at home. A win-win situation.

To maximize the benefit to you. Please consider the following questions:

- Is 5-star accommodation available as part of your package.
- What type of food is available in your room? Are there premium selections and or a personalized menu available?
- What entertainment packages are available to you if you need to stay overnight?
- Ask what kind of nursing services they provide or if you could get a 24-hour personal nurse for your needs.
- Find out if their nurses, hospital staff and other hospital employees are fluent in your language, if not are interpreters available?
- What attractions are close to the hospital/clinic?

Follow-up Treatments

Post operative care is very important. This is where your body recuperates and heals itself. If you do not have proper aftercare you may not get the maximum benefit from your treatment. You should ask the following questions:

- Do you need a close friend or family with you after your treatment?
- Will you be required to stay in the hospital or will be taken to your hotel, after your treatment
- Will you require any special post operative care or treatment?
- Is there any specific condition or ailment that may signal any problem with your recovery that you should be aware of?
- Are contingency plans in place in case of complications during and after your procedure.
- What are you allowed to do after your procedure?
- What should you avoid after your procedure?

Medical Records

Since you are having treatment outside of you home country and away from you normal medical system, you need to know what medical records will be available to you once treatment is completed.

These will be important for you to have with you when you return to your home country.

Will these documents be provided to you in the language of your choice?

Does your hospital or clinic have electronic medical records, if so, can these records be emailed directly to you, or your family doctor? Will the records be in the language you need? Be sure to obtain an email for your doctor, or the administrator of the clinic/hospital in case you need additional information next week, next year.

Questions Regarding Malpractice and Liability

There is always a risk of malpractice. It is possible with any medical procedure. There are different levels of problems with medical procedures, from minor infections, to poorly done surgeries, to clinical death. I am not trying to scare you, but these are all possible. You should ask your provider the following questions:

- Is there a service contract? Does the contract have a clause to cover accountability in the case of complications due to negligence?
 - Has the clinic or hospital had any malpractice claims?
 - If so, how long ago and what was the outcome? What was changed after the claim to ensure it does not happen again?
 - How good is the hospital/clinic record?
 - Is there any insurance that will cover the cost of medical procedures in the event of a problem? What is included in their terms and conditions?
 - What are the local regulations in the host country for malpractice issues?
 - What are the procedures to file for medical malpractice if needed?
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- Will an international patient receive local government or non-profit organization assistance for legal aid and advice for malpractice cases?

Is it Safe?

You should always check to see how the hospital or clinic handles safety concerns. Please consider the following questions that patients could use.

- What are the policies on safety? Are there proper procedures in place for disposal of hazardous or potentially contagious materials like spent needles, etc.?
- What are their hygienic policies on food and inpatient facilities?
- What is the security like at the hospital?
- Is the accommodation or affiliated hotel that the medical facility provides a safe and secure place?
- What are their precautions for post-treatment care?

Always check out your chosen destination online and anywhere else you can.

Remember this is your health – nothing is more important.

Today online research is relatively easy. Many places proudly display online reviews by past patients. If you are unable to find any online reviews, you should immediately ask yourself, why not? You can also look for recommendations from third party sources, such as what clinic, or friends and family, broaden your search to include the name of the care center + review.

You may want to go through the following list:

- Is there a Google My Business rating for this place?
- Does it have a Yahoo recommendation?
- Ask around online, to see if there are any concerns.
- Check ratings and reviews by independent healthcare websites and organizations investigating healthcare destinations. There is a lot of information out there.
- Read testimonies and recommendations from previous patients and medical travelers on forums, websites and bulletin boards.

Good luck, medical tourism is a booming industry, and it is in everyone's interest to keep it as safe as possible.