

HEALTH TOURISM, MEDICAL TOURISM AND WELLNESS PHILOSOPHY

Jerome Klapka Jerome, the English writer humorist was born on May 2, 1859 in Walsall, the county of Staffordshire. He got married to Georgina Elizabeth Henrietta Stanley Marris (a.k.a. Ettie) on June 21, 1888. They spent their honeymoon in a little boat on Thames and it is considered that this fact conditioned creation of the most well-known novel of the writer “Three Men in a Boat (To Say Nothing of the Dog)”. Prototypes of personages became the writer’s friends George Wingrave and Carl Henschel. Comic circumstances are described in the story where friends meet each other and all this happens around the river Thames and its surroundings [1].

The aim of the given article is not to discuss the novel. The author described perfectly the benefit of traveling for health.

Everything starts with introducing the medical directory when the main character remembers that he has Podagra decease, his friend Harris suffers from dizziness and George - from insomnia. After consultations, the friends decided that the reason of all deceases was strain. “What we need is – repose. Reposing and changing environment, tension of brain caused debilitation of nerve system. Changing atmosphere, non-necessity of thinking will regenerate mental balance.” After that they decided to boat “... where will be fresh air and calm. Changing landscape permanently will contain our mind and increased physical activity provides good appetite and tranquil sleep”. The only who was not delighted with this idea was the dog Montmorency.

As soon as the decision was made, three men to say nothing of the dog started their trip to restore health. All these in modern medicine are called: Wellness Tourism, Medical Tourism and Health Tourism.

Wellness

“Wellness – it is money spent in order to feel yourself healthier despite the fact that according to the ordinary medical parameters, you are not “ill”. Nowadays, majority of people have more demand on health than on money”, - says Paul Pilzner, economist and analyst, consultant of the President of United States in the field economy.

Wellness is a balance of mind, body and soul. The term unites physical and mental health, right nutrition, regular physical activity, getting rid of bad habits.

The main task of wellness is to avoid and make prophylaxis of deceases and outer as well as inner signs of aging. Wellness is philosophy of feeling good in spiritual, social and physical spheres. Those who live with wellness philosophy, in spite of any age, are lucky, successful and full of energy

optimists. They pay enough attention to their bodies' outer condition, follow healthy nutrition principals. The main principals of this philosophy are:

- Movement;
- Mental activity;
- Relax and harmony;
- Beauty and physical care;
- Balanced nutrition.

Wellness first of all means changing lifestyle and not curing any particular disease.

According to researches of 2002, the basic services of wellness were directed to prophylaxis (70%) and repose (23%). Wellness basically is for big cities, where in spite of strained rhythm of life and frequent stresses people take not one-time long term vacation, but multiple weekends with additional rest-days.

In literature, the term "wellness" was first used in 1654, but as culture it was introduced in the 60s of 20th century in the United States when the American doctor, Halbert I. Dunn, M.D. introduced the term "wellness" and determined the principles of high quality life. In addition to Dunn M.D. following scientists: Deepak Chopra, Michael Roizen, Mehmet Oz, Don B. Ardell, John Travis, David F. Duncan, and Andrew Weil [4] contributed to developing and popularizing wellness.

Since 90s of the past century, wellness has been taking place in Europe and step by step getting popular what cannot be said about the situation in Georgia. Furthermore, even the term "wellness" is outlandish in our country but fitness is already an ordinary, fashioned and frequently used term.

Nowadays, fitness is a part of wellness as this latter is a broader concept which includes diet and rehabilitation programs, psychical improvement, spa and use of other complex procedures. All these together improve health and, accordingly, impact on spiritual balance.

Wellness equipment is divided in two groups:

- For intensive exercises (tonus tables, vacuum simulators, balance-platforms, vibroplatforms, etc.);
- For passive procedures (press therapy, magneto therapy, thermo therapy with infrared ray, massage beds, etc.).

Differential particularities of wellness equipment are: complexity, multi functionality, simplicity and use of modern technologies. The mentioned equipment allows improving body and the body's general condition in order not to be necessary to follow hard physical strain and hard diet.

Despite some particular cases, there is no principal difference in the term "Wellness Tourism" in different countries. Wellness tourist has quite good health and group of such people is only 7-8% of the total population. Besides, wellness tourists always look for ways to increase health reserves who try to avoid exacerbation of chronic diseases [2].

Health tourism

People, who travel to the further progression of disease prevention, belong to the second category that is called the Health tourism.

At the beginning of the article is described the case about the three man. If the "three-man, to say nothing of a dog" travelled by spa center Cruise ship, instead of the boat, that would be the Health tourism.

In the Law of Georgia "on Tourism and Health-Resorts" the Health tourism is explained this way: "the use of health resorts for the treatment and medical examination, as well as for other medical services" [5].

Medical Spa - The International Association of Centers defines Health Tourism as follows: "This is a journey to improve health which considers visit to the resort or to weight lifting center."

Considering the Georgian resort potential variety, the Health tourism is one of the perspective fields which can bring the country serious economic effect.

We should also recall the fact that during the existence of the Soviet Union the Resort Industry was most developed in Georgia. According to Statistics Committee evidences of that time, in 1989, 980 thousand patients passed the course of treatment and relaxation in Georgian resort facilities. Considering the fact that the one resort pass comprised 12-18-24 days, it is very easy to count what an enormous number of days are we talking about.

Though this was a planned socialist economy period of the Soviet Union, and the similar number of tourists is unreal for today, the fact that the significant activity should be implemented on the development of Health tourism leaves no doubt. However, it is indisputable that an existed resort infrastructure requires cardinal changes and update. Also the staff needs a fundamental training and retraining.

Medical tourism

Medical Tourism - this term implies the practice of receiving medical care abroad which is combined with relaxation and high qualified medical care.

In Wikipedia the following is written about Medical tourism (the same as a medical journey or global health) - "the term has been introduced by travel agencies and mass media", and is pointed to the fast growing segment of international travel whose goal was to obtain health care.

Services which these types of travelers consume comprise procedures as - special operations, for example, change of joints (knee / pelvis), heart surgery, dental and cosmetic surgeries. However, it

comprises virtually every type of health care, including psychiatry, alternative treatments methods, etc [6].

Medical tourism has a very long history. From time immemorial, patients were covering long distances to meet well-known doctors. The reasons why people travel to foreign countries to get medical care are numerous.

Medical tourism is very popular in the United States, Canada and Western Europe. In United States - about 110 million people suffer from various chronic diseases whose treatment is not reimbursed by insurance. That is why many Americans go abroad for treatment of cardiologic, orthopedic or other diseases. For instance, sometimes the same treatments have got a quarter or even tenth of the price in Thailand or India than in the United States.

The different situation is in Canada and Great Britain where citizens have the state insurance, but it takes them months or even 2 years to reach doctors. That is why they prefer to go abroad for medical treatment [7].

The medical tourism is actively developed in Georgia as well. Many Georgians are going to Turkey, Austria, Israel, Germany or the United States. This, certainly, does not happen because treatment is cheaper in these countries - just the opposite. But here are other reasons, such as: better equipped medical centers, more highly qualified doctors, modern methods of diagnosis, etc.

However, not only Georgian people go abroad, but also foreign patients come to Georgia. The hair transplantation clinic Talizi can serve as a good example which has many patients from foreign countries (France, South Korea, Ukraine and others) [8].

“Over 50 countries have identified medical tourism as a national industry. However, accreditation and other measures of quality vary widely across the globe, and some destinations may become hazardous or even dangerous for medical tourists” [6].

Georgia has got a good perspective for developing kind of tourism. Georgian doctors' professionalism and qualification is doubtless in many fields of medicine. Technical equipment of newly established medical centers and hospitals in most cases is satisfying. In my opinion, The Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Affairs of Georgia of Health, should intensify their efforts in this aspect to enable Georgian clinics to pass through accreditations meeting the international standards and and implement quality control mechanisms. After this, medical tourism development master Close-up should be worked out together with the national tourism agency what should gradually be realized.

References

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