



Eco-medical tourism: can it be sustainable?

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Abstract

This paper explores the role of medical tourism in Costa Rica, a country that is better known as a premier ecotourism destination.



My interest in this topic



medicina de la tos

Health Care Costs

- Health Care Costs are a \$2 Trillion a year industry in America and predicted to double in the next decade.
- As Americans (and others) seek become more health conscious, cost becomes a necessary decision in one's health.

Background

The roots of medical tourism may be found in the Neolithic and Bronze Age with visits to mineral springs around the Mediterranean.

Current medical tourism is more likely linked to seeking less expensive alternatives for medical procedures in foreign countries in eastern Europe, southeast Asia and Latin America.



America's Place in Medical Tourism

Saratoga Spa State Park: **Birthplace of NERR**



<http://www.timeout.com/newyork/articles/travel/9106/saratoga-springs-ny>

Ecotourism

The background image is a photograph of a tropical forest. In the foreground, several large, heart-shaped green leaves with prominent veins are visible, some showing signs of insect damage. The leaves are attached to a tree trunk that is partially covered in moss. The background is filled with a dense canopy of various green trees and foliage, creating a sense of a deep, lush forest.

Ecotourism is defined as the responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people. (TIES, 1990)

Medical Tourism

Medical tourism is defined as the practice of patients seeking lower cost health care procedures abroad - often packaged with travel and sightseeing excursions. (Senator Gordon Smith, Chairman of the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging)

Clinica Biblica, San Jose, CR

Eco-Medical Tourism

The image shows the exterior of a clinic building. A prominent sign on the wall reads "LABORATORIO CLINICO FORTUNA" and "RESULTADOS EL MISMO DIA". Below this, it says "Dr. Sergio F. Salazar" and "Servicio a Domicilio". At the bottom of the sign, it says "TODO en EXAMENES" and "Tel. 4799461 - C. 3790719". There is also a smaller sign above the entrance that says "LABORATORIO CLINICO". The building has a corrugated metal roof and a blue-painted metal frame. A utility pole is visible on the left side of the image.

Defined as the responsible travel of patients seeking lower cost health care procedures abroad to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people.

Sustainability Concerns

The background of the slide is a photograph of a mountainous landscape. In the foreground, there are several dark green evergreen trees. The middle ground shows rolling hills covered in green vegetation. In the background, a large mountain range stretches across the horizon under a clear blue sky.

- What happens to the local population when tourists displace them in hospital beds?
- Medical waste is hazardous!

Accreditation



The **Certification in Sustainable Tourism Program (CST)** is a program sponsored by the **Costa Rican Tourism Institute (ICT)** to differentiate the tourism businesses based on the compliance of a sustainable model of natural, cultural and social resource management.

Accreditation

The medical equivalence to this accreditation is the **Joint Commission International (JCI)**.



Case Study: Costa Rica



San Jose?

- Has had a long history of providing excellent health care in the fields of dentistry and cosmetic surgeries.
- “Medical care in San Jose is adequate, but is limited in areas outside of San Jose. Most prescription and over-the-counter medications are available throughout Costa Rica.” (US State Dept.)

Facilities



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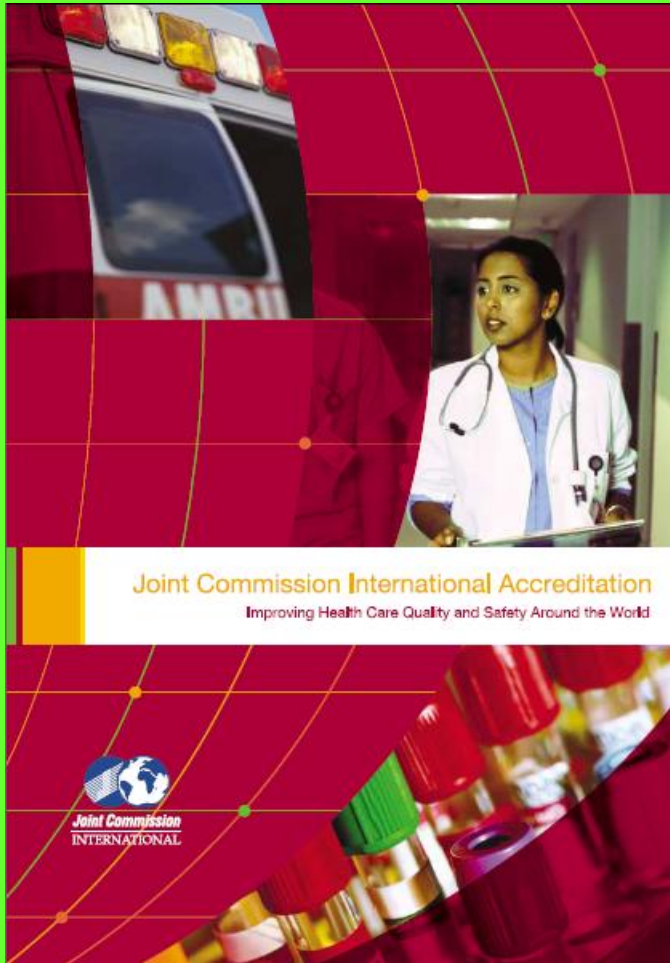
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Hospital Clinica Biblica has become the First hospital in Central America to become accredited by the Joint Commission International. Others are seeking accreditation.

Access to Doctors

	PPP\$US	Population (Millions)	Percent GDP
Cuba	326	11.30	6.2
Suriname	376	0.40	5.7
Argentina	555	38.00	5.1
Uruguay	399	3.40	5.1
Costa Rica	433	4.10	4.9
Panama	296	3.10	4.8
Barbados	657	0.30	4.3
Dominica	243	0.10	4.3
Guyana	179	0.80	4.2

Source: <http://www.worldmapper.org/>

Medical Waste

The red biohazard bags are misused as regular trash bags, which encourages scavengers to open them to find soda cans and paper. Then they empty the sturdy bags to carry what they find. So the dangerous contents are left at the dump site.



Future Research

- Explore the human dimensions on health care opportunities for the local citizens;
- Identify chief ecotourist attractions in Costa Rica that eco-medical tourists may visit, and;
- Assess the relative importance of these attractions in the recovery stage of the medical procedure.