



Medical Tourism M A G A Z I N E

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Turkey's Medical Tourism Potential

Medical Tourism Association

Renee-Marie Stephano



Renee-Marie Stephano, COO of the Medical Tourism Association, recently spoke at the 2nd International Health Tourism Congress in Turkey, February 27th-March 2nd 2009. The Congress was a platform for both domestic and foreign participants to discuss the matters on health tourism including Turkey's need to expand its tourism activities and improve the health tourism already in progress since Turkey has great potential in this industry. Renee had the opportunity to speak on Strategic Marketing Opportunities and Turkey's promising potential.

Turkey holds a promising position for a bright future in medical tourism. Many improvements have been recorded in the health aspects of the country, which has been advancing on the road to full membership in the European Union. For one, the number of hospitals that provide health services in accordance with EU standards has increased rapidly. For about 10 years now, the technological infrastructure, as well as the comfort and quality of services of the hospitals in Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, have been on the same level as their European counterparts. Moreover, the majority of doctors and other health personnel who are experienced, skilled and knowledgeable reside in these cities.

Turkey receives patients mainly from the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Belgium, Azerbaijan, Russia, Bulgaria, Romania, Kosovo and Syria. Turkey is preferred mostly for eye, dental, prostate and fertility operations. When we evaluate the state of our medical tourism in terms of contributions from Turkish citizens living in Europe, the variety of the services provided have been very high, as shown by annual economic earnings that have yielded more than 100 million euros thus far.

A major strength of the medical health industry in Turkey is that it has sufficient capacity for domestic and foreign patients. There are many highly qualified doctors in Turkish hospitals, which are equipped with the latest technology and staffed by personnel who provide good and qualified health care. Private hospitals are top-notch, while almost all hospitals have the ISO 2001 quality management certification. More than ten first-class hospitals have been accredited by the JCI while others are still in the process of accreditation. There are no waiting periods for treatment.

The elements of Turkey's competitive advantage in health tourism can thus be identified as follows: the high quality of infrastructure and hardware in the hospitals; the high experience levels of the doctors and health service providers at par with European standards; the price advantages in comparison with other countries; the country's natural and historical prosperity and its unique geographical location as a bridge between Europe and the Middle East; and the appropriate climatic conditions combined with quality tourism administration and well-known Turkish hospitality.

These factors, coupled with the desire of the almost five million Turkish individuals living abroad to receive their health treatments in Turkey, can be mentioned as Turkey's strengths in the health tourism industry.

The Turkish American Chamber of Commerce & Industry presents a Medical Tourism Conference March 14th 2009 in Chicago, Illinois. The Sixth Annual Medical Ball takes place the night of the 14th of March at the Marriott Chicago Oakbrook.

The Turkish American Doctors Association of Midwest will hold their conference on April 15th-16th 2009 in Chicago.