

Technology driving the rise of medical tourism

Please attribute this piece to Eugene Chng, Director of Regional Sales, APAC at Hyland, creator of OnBase

Medical tourism is a fast-growing industry, with an increasing number of patients seeking affordable or specialised treatment outside their home countries. Asia is one of the leading regions in the world for medical tourism and has developed a niche for affordable and high quality healthcare, particularly in markets such as Thailand, India and Singapore which account for 90 percent of medical tourism in Asia. This region is also a popular Wellness Tourism destination for travelers seeking a holiday that combines yoga, meditation, spa treatments or other wellness-related pursuits. According to a [study](#) by the Global Wellness Summit, wellness tourism is projected to grow 9.1 per cent annually through 2017 which is nearly 50 per cent higher than that of overall global tourism¹.

The medical tourism market in Asia is anticipated to post a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of around 22% during 2014 to 2018, according to a [report](#) by RNCOS². Healthcare providers in the region are actively moving towards digitisation of clinical data to ensure patient safety and care, and to streamline workflow systems for international patients.

Health and wellness tourism in Thailand

Thailand has always been a popular holiday destination and tourism accounts for about 10% of GDP, and health and wellness tourism revenue in Thailand is expected to reach 3.11 billion USD by 2017³. The thriving medical tourism sector means that visitors expect high quality healthcare and Thailand is rapidly adopting high-tech solutions in both medical equipment and IT systems.

For the very first time, the HIMSS Asia Pacific Annual Conference and Exhibition is being held in Thailand in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH). Events such as HIMSS provide a platform for knowledge sharing and encourage dialogue on best practice for use of technology to drive more efficient and effective healthcare.

Technology as an enabler

Technology has proved to be a catalyst for the growth of medical tourism. For a patient considering overseas healthcare, there are three main considerations – firstly, quality of medical professionals; secondly, healthcare infrastructure; and thirdly, the ability to access timely, accurate and relevant information. Technology solutions facilitate the third factor – helping medical professionals and patients to access relevant and timely information to ensure the best outcomes.

The volume of information handled by healthcare providers has grown enormously, and technology solutions become critical to ensure that information is accurate, organised and protected. At Hyland, we are at the forefront of technology solutions that help to improve patient care. OnBase, our Enterprise Content Management (ECM) platform, enables organisations to digitalise their workplaces and fundamentally transform their operations. Software solutions such as Vendor Neutral Archives (VNA) and mobile technology are helping medical tourism reach its full potential.

For example, ECM creates more complete administrative records so healthcare providers can utilise case and business process management tools to become more efficient and lower costs while also improving patient care.

Beyond administrative data, ECM technology can now also manage clinical content like lab results, radiographs, wound care photos, electrocardiograms and more. By integrating this content into the clinical content repository system, clinicians can quickly and easily access it without switching between applications. The information is presented in context to help clinicians have not just the data, but the relevant data. ECM also helps a healthcare provider to easily transfer patient information to another medical professional anywhere in the world, ensuring continuity of care and avoid medical errors.

As the healthcare landscape changes, so must hospitals and healthcare organisations as they adapt to new realities and trends. To address these changes, it is important to have a solution that adapts and scales with future technologies to maximise existing investments and deliver a higher standard of care for their patients. The right ECM solution helps do exactly that by delivering timely information to users, and integrating and enhancing the value of legacy systems. Technology has revolutionised the way people think about healthcare and the way they access medical treatment. It plays an important role in raising the international profile of hospitals in the region. The medical tourism sector will only continue to grow as patients are willing to travel further to access more cost-effective and specialised healthcare services.

¹ The Global Wellness Tourism Economy 2013 & 2014 | Global Wellness Institute | http://www.globalwellnesssummit.com/images/stories/gwi/GWI_2014_Global_Wellness_Tourism_Economy_Report_Final.pdf

² Asian Medical Tourism Market Outlook | RNCOS Business Consultancy Services | <http://www.rncos.com/Market-Analysis-Reports/Asian-Medical-Tourism-Market-Outlook-2018-IM695.htm>

³ Asia Medical Tourism Analysis and Forecast to 2015 | Renub Research | <http://www.renub.com/report/asia-medical-tourism-analysis-and-forecast-to-2015-83>