

TOURISM AND HEALTH.

After the nineteen seventies, tourism has become one of the most important sectors and concepts in the world. In Turkey, the beginning of the nineteen eighties marked a swift attention being turned towards the Tourism industry. There has been an outburst in the Tourism sector for the past two or three years in Turkey. In line with this, there has been an increasing debate on the types of tourism, its problems, future and the opportunities involved in this sector. Tourism is thought of as the movement of people from one country to another for so many different reasons. Therefore the health of these people and the subject of health goes hand in hand with tourism. As Buhara Health, we have been working on tourist health and Health tourism and their relationship with Europe for the past six years. Recently, in the past one or two years, this topic has gained importance and recognition and has been debated in the Turkish government and among the public as a whole. In order to understand the topic very well, some concepts are defined below. Tourist health:

It comprises the health (in case of sickness, their treatment) of people on temporary stay from abroad, the sanitation of their places of stay and the health of the people who provide services to them. Health tourism:

- 1) Travelling from one country to another only for the purpose of medical treatment (longer periods of waiting on the waiting list, cheaper costs of treatment or better quality of health service, e.t.c)
- 2) Spa treatment of medical conditions pending a medical report stating the necessity of such treatment. Spa (hot mineral springs) tourism.

Involves trips to benefit from geo-thermal sites. 1) Traveling from one country to another for spa therapy stated by a medical report. 2) Benefitting from the refreshing and comforting effects of spas through comfortable hotel services (This type is more common in Turkey) Most of the time, the two services are not completely separable. Sometimes there are even provided together. In most countries, going to spas for the purpose of resting and comforting is a part of Spa tourism rather than Health tourism. In Turkey health tourism is misunderstood as Spa tourism. However, Spa tourism is just a part of health tourism. Most of the time tourist health is also a part of Health tourism. Example, patients who come to this country for pelvic prosthesis operation and eye laser therapy are all counted as tourists. The problems they face with traveling and lodging must also be evaluated in the concept of tourism. In the example given above, the pelvic prosthesis operation and all the procedures related to it in the hospital is considered in the concept of health tourism while if the patient were to get diarrhea in the course of his or her stay in the hotel, this would be considered in the concept of tourist health. Summary. Although tourist health, Health tourism and spa tourism are defined as above, these concepts are not completely separable from each other. a) tourist health b) Spa tourism 1) Therapy oriented spa services 2) Resting oriented spa services. c) Health tourism. First of all, this confusion or misunderstanding of concepts should be resolved and all the concepts lawfully defined in this country (Turkey). After this, laws (directives) can then be designed to cover for the services that will be provided by all parties related to these concepts. A). TOURIST HEALTH. This involves the health of healthy people who come to Turkey for resting and entertainment purposes or to see the many rich endowments (culture, history, mountains, caves) and the sanitation of the places that they stay. Above all, tourists will prefer places with excellent infrastructure that will not pose threat to their health. However, if they were to fall sick unexpectedly, they would expect to be provided with emergent and secured health services. In this perspective, treatment and the cost of treatment of unexpected medical problems is of importance. Matters related to the health of tourists. 1) The places where tourists are found and its workers should be healthy. 2) The health of the community with regard to the possible diseases that tourism can bring. 3) The health of tourists and the provision of health services in cases of emergency. a) operation of health personnel and authorities. b) Relationship with insurance companies abroad and costs. 4) The health services of our

country will be recognized as a result of provision of tourism and health services to foreigners.5)The health problems of Turkish citizens abroad on holiday in Turkey.B)SPA(HOT MINERAL SPRINGS) TOURISM.a)Resting oriented spa tourists.Some tourists come to benefit from the natural beauty and geo-thermal sources of our country for resting purposes.In this regard the location of the spa,the quality of the geo-thermal site and the luxury of the medium is of importance.Their main aim is relaxation and wellness.Spas that give small sized hotel services are not in this category.b)Therapy oriented spa tourism.This involves tourists diagnosed of a disease in thier home country with indication for spa therapy.In this regard, medical report that will be brought from the patient's home country is of importance.They will also have to undergo the spa therapy under the control and supervision of Turkish doctors.Here it's not luxurious hotels but the quality and physical type of the spa that is of importance.Even small modern spa centers can provide this service.Up to date resting oriented spas and therapy oriented spas have often been confused with each other.The reasons for this include the following;1)In this country and abroad these two concepts have not been marketed and itroduced differently.2) The medical indications of spa therapy is not clearly cited.Also, FTR as a department has just recently gained recognition and certificated modern spas are only just spreading.3)Upto date, even when there is an indication for spa therapy,certificated spa centers where the patient can go are not common.4)The amounts social security and insurance companies refund are far below the costs of spa therapy.5) There has not been any serious approach and reserch in to the amounts european health care providers pay when they transfer patients abroad for spa therapy.As a result of all these everybody prefered luxurious spas (whether for resting or therapy oriented) and had to pay for the costs.C)HEALTH TOURISMHealth is a need and the right of humanity which can not be done without.Every country sets up its own health politics and meets the health needs of its citizens.Our country in the last ten years and especially in the last two years ,has seen a very serious working relations between the public and private health sectors.As a result of this,health services has shifted towards the private sector.There has been serious work at the private sector as a result of which big hospitals(especially in the big cities) that can compete with european standarts are springing up.These big and well established hospitals are above the general standarts of our country so they have to open up to the foreign market.Health expenditure as a ratio of the total expenditure in this country is limited and the health expenses per head does not exceed USA 200 dollars.In order for these big health institutions to survive they will have to open up to the foreign market.Also, if the geographic location,the trend to join the european union,the level the private sector has attained and the developments in tourism are considered,the seriousness of health tourism and the economic value that it will bring to this country is great.HEALTH SERVICES ABROAD AND ITS IMPORTANCE TO TURKEY.This topic is divided into 3 sections for better understanding.1)Europe2)middle Asia and The middle east3)Africa1)Health tourism in Europe.Health services in Europe is very qualitative and expensive.The expectations of the society is at the highest level.The society is aging and because of that the need for health care servises is also increasing.As a result, health care expenditure is becoming unbearable with each passing day.The situation is even worse in countries where private health care and private insurance is on the increase.While governments are forced to increase their expenditure on health from the total budget,profits made by private insurers is falling and because health care providers do not get expected returns from their investments they are forced to invest more or go into more lucrative sectors(Food,weapons,communication,e.t.c)Consequently,the europeans are researching in to new ways of preventing problems that inadequate finance of health care will cause in the future.One of the most important of these is purchasing and selling of health care services at cheaper prices,increasing the involvement of insurees or even leaving out some services that were in the insurance coverage before.The situation in Europe now requires health care providers who will provide cheaper but quality services and also short duration of waiting to compensate the insurer who has to pay more and also the insuree whose benefits from the insurance coverage has been cut down.As a result Europe has become a candidate for purchasing health care services abroad. What shoud not be forgotten is that the European will not compromise quality and that the patient will have both lawful and cultural rights to choose where to receive medical services. The European will still receive health care from Europe, he will fight for his right and the cost of services will not be

important. Because of this, provision of health care services to the European is not going to be easy in the short run. However when ;

1) the quality of our services is highly upgraded

2) our health sector is well advertised

3) health and tourism services are offered in a packet

4) the government and private sector forms a strong bond with European insurers, then Europeans will begin to come here for health care services. Even then, it will not be easy to please them. The compensations that will be paid for malpractice will be a problem. However, if the more than four million Turkish immigrants and the twenty million or so other Moslem immigrants (Pakistanese, Iranians, Irakies, Africans) residing in Europe are made the prime targets, then the situation will be different. Europe obtained very cheap labor force from its colonies and the underdeveloped world after the second world war (Of course the human work force obtained during the colonial era has even a different dimension in the case of Britain). These immigrants who worked in Europe for years now own businesses (especially Turks), have married and integrated into the European society. This group is now an inseparable part of Europe. Generally with regard to health services provision, they have the same rights as the native Europeans. However, especially in recent years, they have not met with the same treatments as the natives on receiving health care services. The European market with respect to Health tourism should be considered in three different categories.

1) The native Europeans

2) Turkish citizens living in Europe

3) Other Moslem immigrants living in Europe (Pakistanese, Arabs and Africans)

There are two kinds of health services for Europeans going abroad (Tourist health and Health tourism). Emergency health care for tourists on foreign holidays is considered under tourist health. Going abroad for cheaper health care services, planned treatment or to escape long waiting lists (chronic diseases) should be considered under Health tourism. In this regard, the most important point that needs stressing is that the insuree has the right to choose the country and hospital in which to undergo treatment. Therefore it is important to advertise and market the service to the insuree. The final decision will be made on the basis of the insuree's wish. Turkish citizens residing in Europe:

This group is unable to receive health care services as they used. Especially the first and second generation immigrants can not express their problems because of language problems. Generally, they trust Turkish doctors more. When on leave in Turkey, they were unable to obtain fast and quality health services (especially in the social security trust hospitals). As a result of the project initiated by Buhara Health six years ago, they are now able to receive medical care from private health institutions with the approval of the insurance companies free charge. However, they are still unable to receive treatment for planned, non emergent cases. Most of them would like to receive treatment for chronic diseases too, in Turkey. Therefore Turkish doctors should organise themselves and discuss this topic with the insurance companies in Europe. It will then be necessary to reach out and advertise our hospitals to the Turkish immigrants. The offer to be made to the European insurance companies should include the following: The fact that it is cheaper for Turkish immigrants resident in Europe to receive planned medical care in Turkey (including travel expenses for the patient and care taker) and also that the private hospitals in Turkey are well established and the patients are therefore pleased with it. In any case, countries like England and Holland have already taken the lead in this regard. Therefore if the private sector establishes contact with the insurers in Europe, this topic

which is already under discussion will be resolved in a short time. Once the Turkish citizens and the other muslim immigrants residing in Europe begin receiving medical treatment in Turkey, then the local population of Europe will follow suit if the quality of services and marketing is good enough. Otherwise it will be very difficult for us if we target the Europeans first without putting up these infrastructure. They are not prepared for this yet and one or two malpractices will lead to the closure of the market. B) Middle East and Middle Asia:

Muslims in the Middle East have problems entering Europe and The USA after the eleventh of September terrorist attacks. Receiving health care is one of the many areas in which they face difficulties. They can not move in and out of Europe very easily these days. Like it has always been known, the rich in the Middle East has always received medical care services from Europe and The USA because the Turkish health system is not well developed or not marketed. Today, the closest country where they can receive modern, quality health care is Turkey. This opportunity must be used well. This topic should be explained well to the individuals in the society (rather than insurance companies) so that they will be convinced. Also, attractive packages should be offered to them because they pay for costs of treatments out of pocket. The situation in middle Asia is a bit different because they are aware of quality health services but do not have quality health providers. Some of the rich go to the West for health care. It could be said that The Middle East and Middle Asia receive most of their technology and services from the West. However Turkey is closer to them, has a large population of muslims, has a very good climate and natural beauty and its health system (especially some of the private hospitals in the two or three big cities) is not behind that of Europe. There can not, therefore, be any excuse why Turkey can not take its place in the Health tourism industry. The only excuse is our lack of advertisement, marketing and inability to discover this vast market. C) African countries:

Like in many other sectors, health services provision is also underdeveloped in these countries. The upper class receives medical care from The West because their close ties date back to the colonial era. However, this group is being ignored recently because of the problems faced by The West. Turkey for the first time, is developing interest in this market. With time, quality and cheaper health services can be offered. In conclusion:

Health care services can be marketed to Europe because it is cheaper to treat chronic diseases in Turkey and to The Middle East and Middle Asia because of the problems they face after the eleventh of September attacks. The situation is different with Spa tourism because our Spas are definitely of high quality and are cheap. If it is advertised well to the Europeans then it can easily be marketed. (of course it will be easier to market resting oriented spas) The services that should be offered under health tourism must first of all include eye laser therapy, plastic surgery, dental treatment, cardiac surgery, etc.

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