

3-4-2014

Health Policy & Management News

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Recommended Citation

Georgia Southern University, "Health Policy & Management News" (2014). *Health Policy & Management Department News (Through 6/28)*. 32.

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Analyze Internet Narratives

March 4, 2014



A collaborative study including Dr. Gulzar Shah, director of research at Georgia Southern University Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health, analyzes internet narratives by health travelers to Turkey. Patients regularly travel to the West for advanced medical care, but now the trend is also shifting in the opposite direction. Many people from Western countries now seek care outside of their country. This phenomenon has been labeled medical tourism or health travel. Information regarding health travelers' actual outcomes, experiences, and perceptions is lacking or insufficient. However, advanced Internet technology and apps provide information on medical tourism and are a vehicle for patients to share their experiences. Turkey has a large number of internationally accredited hospitals, is a top tourism destination, and is positioning itself to attract international patients.

The objective of this research was to identify the important individual characteristics of health travelers; outline the push and pull factors for seeking health care in Turkey; identify satisfaction with the outcomes and the results of these individuals' treatments; and note positive and negative factors influencing their perceptions and overall experiences about patients' health travel.

This analysis provides an understanding of the insights of medical tourists through the words of actual health travelers. This nonintrusive methodology provides candid insights of common themes of health travelers and may be applied to study other patient experiences. The findings of this research expand the body of knowledge in medical tourism and serve as a platform for further qualitative and quantitative research on health travelers' experiences.

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