

HEALTH ALERT!

Safety Is Key To Growing Medical Travel Trend

(NAPSA)—Increasing health care costs have prompted many Americans to consider treatments abroad, but patients should not cut costs at the expense of safety.

According to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), health care costs have been increasing by 10 percent per year. Additionally, the U.S. Census Bureau reports that 45 million Americans are uninsured. Faced with this growing crisis, Americans are looking to places such as Singapore and India for lower-cost medical care. Costs can average 50 to 70 percent less than in the U.S.

“For Americans who cannot afford the high cost of health care in the U.S., medical travel may be an excellent alternative,” says Matthew C. Fontana, M.D., Chief Medical Officer of GlobalChoice Healthcare. “However, consumers need to do their homework to ensure they make a safe, well-informed decision.”

Dr. Fontana suggests the following safety tips for consumers who may be considering traveling overseas for medical care:

Know the Basics. Medical travel is most applicable to procedures with a relatively short “episode-of-care.” Examples include certain orthopedic, cardiovascular, cosmetic and dental surgeries. If you work with a medical travel company, make sure that the company has a medical professional involved in planning its services.

Ask About Accreditation and Credentials. Independent organizations such as Joint Commission International (JCI) review the capabilities and safety measures of the hospitals they approve. Find



Before traveling abroad for medical care, do some research and talk to your doctor to make your trip safer.

out about the training and professional affiliations of the health care provider you choose.

Understand Your Costs Up Front. Before agreeing to a care package, learn what the price includes, as well as how unexpected charges will be addressed. Ask about the availability of on-the-ground local assistance to serve as your contact throughout your stay.

Discuss Your Decision With Personal Physician. You may consider obtaining clearance to travel for a major medical procedure. Take the time to research the immunization requirements of the country to which you are traveling and discuss these with your health care provider. Research requirements at www.cdc.gov/travel. Arrange for a follow-up visit with your physician upon your return.

Plan Ahead. You will need a passport. Visit www.travel.state.gov to find out if you require a travel visa. Appoint a medical power of attorney prior to traveling abroad and bring a copy with you.

For more information, visit www.gchcare.com or call (877) 858-0123.