

MEDICAL TOURISM

Demand for Cuban Medical Tourism by Russian Consumers

Commissioned by Travel Agency “Magazin Goryashix Putevok”

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Medical tourism, often addressed as health tourism, is a new concept in terms of tourism industry in general, and it is also one of the rapidly developing and growing ones. This thesis gives information on the medical tourism in general and its history. It also revises the development stages of the medical tourism in the world. Cuban medical tourism is analyzed on its own, as well as Russian medical tourism and the demand for it. Medical tourism is rather popular among Russians due to various reasons. The connection between Cuban medical institutions and Russian tour operators is revised in detail to understand the possibilities, reasons and need for medical tourism by Russian consumers in Cuba.

The chosen research method was quantitative research through questionnaires sent to companies involved in medical tourism both in Cuba and Russia, as well as content analysis and case studies.

This report could be used to furthermore develop medical tourism, not only between Cuba and Russia, but in general. The results may be used for the development of cooperation between Cuban and Russian organizations, as it contains information on the possible structure of the institutions and the way cooperation could be organized by both countries.

Keyword(s) medical tourism, health tourism, Cuba, Russia

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1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to take a closer look at the state of medical tourism as a part of the whole tourism industry and to identify it as a definition. The main focus, however, will be on medical tourism in Cuba and its popularity among Russian medical tourists, as an example for this research. The state of medical tourism in both Cuba and Russia will be analyzed as well.

The reason for choosing this topic is that medical tourism is a growing part of tourism industry, which has not been researched that well yet. It is often confused or mistaken with other similar definitions within tourism industry. Medical tourism is also one of the quickly developing parts of tourism industry in Cuba and one of the parts that brings economical benefits to the country. Annually there are more and more people going for medical treatments abroad in the world, and that results the growth and popularity of the medical tourism as a separate and independent part of the industry.

The aim and main objective of this research is to understand how well medical tourism is developed so far, and then look more closely on the development of medical tourism in Cuba. Another important question is whether medical tourism could be a strong independent branch of tourism industry and be promoted separately from the other components of the industry. The sustainability of development of medical tourism in general and more specifically in Cuba is another topic to be reviewed in this thesis.

The commissioner for this research is the Russian travel agency "Magazin goryashix putevok", which is a company with offices all around Russia, and there is a big market for whatever this travel agency has to offer. The main focus of this thesis is on whether medical tourism is something that Russian tourists are interested in. The aim is to find out what Russians think of medical tourism, where they would prefer to go if they chose to travel for medical purposes and also whether Cuban medical tourism suits their needs and is prepared to receive medical tourists from abroad.

2 INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMISSIONER

As it was mentioned earlier, the commissioner for this thesis is the travel agency "Magazin goryashix putevok", later on referred to as MGP. First MGP office was opened in 1998 by Andrey Ozolin in Moscow. It was the time when Russian people did not travel as much abroad, preferring to go to the Black seashore to destinations like Crimea and Sochi. MGP offered tours at very low prices in comparison with the other travel agencies. That is why MGP targeted ordinary people with ordinary income. After the success of the very first office, Andrey Ozolin opened new offices in Moscow. Later on, for the first time in the history of Russian tourism business, MGP started offering franchises to other companies. That is how MGP was created, becoming the first travel agency in Russia to consist of different smaller travel agencies. Since the tours are offered to clients by comparing prices of travel agencies inside MGP, it can offer really low prices. Nowadays there is a variety of offices in every big city in Russia, and also in Kazakhstan, Belarus and Ukraine. (Magazin Goryashix Putevok 2015.)

MGP offers tours within Russia`s borders, to a lot of countries throughout Europe, almost all of the countries in Asia. It also offers tours to Australia, USA, Iran, The United Arab Emirates, and Oman and luxury holidays in Fiji, Tanzania, Maldives, Mauritius and Seychelles. Among African countries, there are trips to South African Republic, Tunisia, Kenya, Madagascar and Morocco. Among South American countries on offer there are Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, Mexico and Peru. And as for the countries in the Caribbean region, there are trips to Jamaica, Dominican Republic, Costa Rica and Cuba. (Magazin Goryashix Putevok 2015.)

As for the connection of MGP to medical tourism, the company nowadays offers medical tours only within Russia and Crimea. However, they are now planning to have a separate branch of destinations focusing on medical and wellness tourism. That is why they are monitoring all of the countries for cooperation. This thesis would help them decide whether to offer medical tours to Cuba or not, and how to do it. (Magazin Goryashix Putevok 2015.)

There are certain benefits for the company in terms of conducting the research. The most obvious benefits that the company wants to get – possibility to increase productivity, or create new product lines, gain competitive advantage in the tourism field (Investopedia 2015). Some other benefits of the research for the company are boost in sales, opening of new markets, gaining a reputation as an innovative business company and find new business partnerships (Invest NI 2015). All of those goals could be reached through conducting this research and gaining the results.

This research therefore could be used by MGP as a background for further research. This thesis would give a company a look at the state of medical tourism in Cuba as it is nowadays, and also will help the company understand, whether it needs to research Cuban medical tourism more deeply. Finally, this research will help the company decide, whether it wants to invest into researching medical tourism in Cuba and whether Cuba is a suitable and interesting destination for medical tourism for Russians.

There are a lot of companies that provide medical tourism throughout the world, and Russia is no different. However, all of those companies are very focused on the medical side of the medical tourism. MGP, being a very important travel agency for Russian tourism market, could offer its clients the wider choice of products through arranging medical tours. This would most definitely lead to the creation of the new markets and new partnerships. All of the above would then lead to the growth of sales, as the company would have even more to offer to its customers. This would also increase the competitiveness of the company in the market, as nowadays innovative ideas are very important to the development of tourism business in general. Being innovative is something that would help company stay one of the biggest travel agencies in Russia.

3 MEDICAL TOURISM

3.1 Definition

Health and the increase of life activity of people are the core issues in the contemporary value chain of the society. The number of people that care about their health and physical state grows, as well as the number of those who want and need to receive medical treatment of high quality. This leads to the fact that new institutions that offer such treatments appear. Their locations depend on the natural, historical, cultural and socio-economical specialties of countries. Consumers are presented with a choice, which could be affected by their own personal values, goals and possibilities. This all leads to the creation of wellness, therapeutic and medical tourism. (Zharova 2012.)

Medical tourism has not been explained quite well yet. There are different definitions suggested to explain it. However, the main one states that medical tourism is a specially organized leave outside the borders of one's native country to receive necessary medical treatment with clinical interference (Kelley 2013). Precisely clinical interference brings difference to medical tourism as definition, in contrast with wellness or therapeutic tourism. Therapeutic tourism in that case stands for the tourism where the main goal is the rehabilitation through recreation (Tooman 2013). Wellness tourism in its turn means travel to maintain patients' well-being and life satisfaction through the experiences of healthy treatments, and has to do with quality of life (Fernandes, Fernandes 2013).

Taking into account the definition given above, the medical tourist could be identified as a consumer of medical tourism services, a patient travelling outside his country of origin by doctor's recommendation or on his own with the help of a tour operator to receive qualified medical treatment, whether it is just a diagnosis, treatment itself or rehabilitation in a hospital, in a specialized medical institution (Lunt, Smith 2011). Medical tourism always implies that there is a tour operator involved, organizing the whole trip and offering both medical and non-medical services.

According to the Figure 1, there are three groups of international patients that obtain medical treatments in a country. The first group consists of international patients who live in a country and have a residence permit there. The second group consists of those, who seek medical help in the emergency cases during their stay in a country. The third group consists of medical tourists. Those are people who come to a country with a specific goal – to receive medical treatment that they cannot or do not want to receive in their home country.

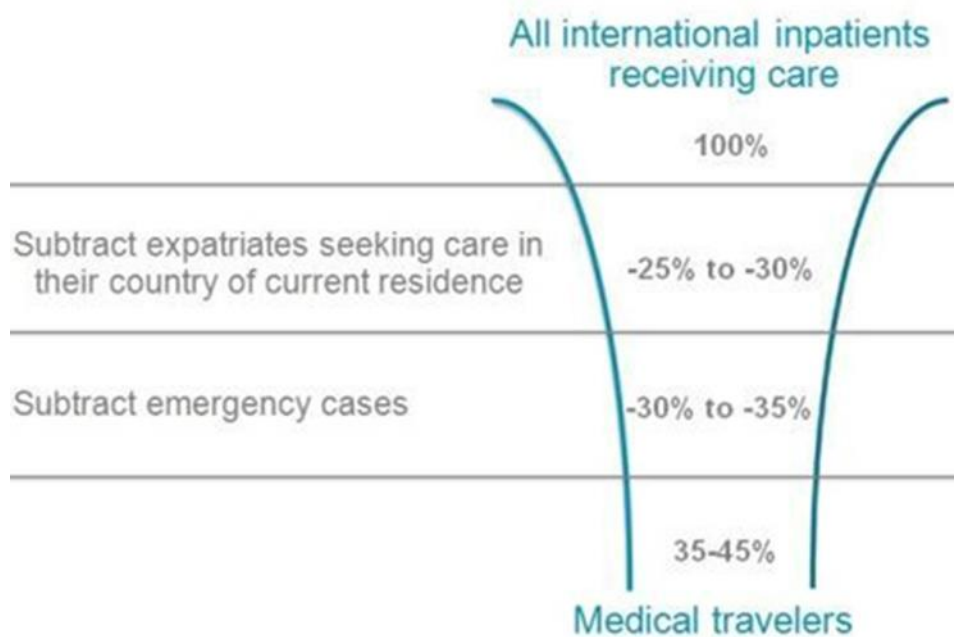


Figure 1. Who Are the Medical Tourists (Kelley 2013)

Medical tourism, which is also referred to as health tourism, means the travel of patients to another country to receive medical treatment. This does not necessarily mean that medical tourism is only for wealthy people, although major part of it still is. Both people from developed and rich countries and the ones from less developed countries nowadays travel abroad to receive medical treatments. There are various reasons for such decisions – medicine could be expensive, medical treatments not possible or even illegal or the quality of medical services on offer could be low. For example, dental and cosmetic surgeries are much cheaper and also of high-quality in Costa Rica, Malaysia, Mexico and Panama. France and Uruguay provide excellent and cheap medical care for retirees. (Ross 2013.)

Another issue is that people may travel to another country for the purpose of medical treatment simply because some kinds of treatments are not legal in their country. Most of the countries that perform illegal surgeries are located in South America; for example, Guatemala, Colombia, Argentina and Mexico provide illegal organ transplantation. (Latov 2007.)

In overall, medical tourism could be divided into three categories – cosmetic, dental and general. Cosmetic surgeries are very popular in countries like Brazil, India, Thailand, South Korea, Poland, Switzerland and Hungary (Hung 2014). Dental surgeries are usually associated with Mexico, Turkey, Czech Republic, Spain, Dubai and Philippines (Lanier 2012). General surgeries are offered almost in every country since every country in the world has something to offer in terms of medical treatments and its quality.

Although medical tourism is becoming more and more popular, there are several risks related to such type of tourism. There are high risks of patients becoming infected during or after the surgery with tuberculosis, typhoid and mosquito-transmitted infections, as Western people have different immunity system to the one in Asia, for example. Popular destinations like Malaysia and India are the best examples of the possible infections after the surgery. (medic8 2015.)

Medical tourism is a rather new topic not only in medicine and tourism but also in people`s social lives. It is often related and even mistaken for wellness or therapeutic tourism, although all of those types of tourism are somewhat different from each other. Such mistakes lead to the allocation of roles of doctors and other medical personnel and tour operators within medical tourism. If the main role in medical tourism belonged to tour operators, this would commercialize offered medical treatments and lead to the reduction of quality of such treatments. On the other hand, if the leading position was left to doctors, this would lead to the improvement in quality, but at the same time would not be able to guarantee high quality of services on offer. (Shekin 2013.)

Taking into account the information given above, it is true that medical tourism has not been that researched yet, although it is a growing part of the tourism industry. While medical tourism remains unresearched, there may be confusions with identifying it or with organizing it. That is why it is necessary to come up with a plan to mix together both doctors' and tour operators' actions to provide best services to those who are interested in or in need for medical treatments abroad.

3.2 History

Modern medical tourism has its roots from the Greek pilgrims' travels to a small territory in the Saronic Gulf named Epidauria. Greeks believed that their health god Asklepios healed all of their diseases in the sleep, so they built a sanctuary for him, which was the beginning of the first medical tourism trips. However, there is evidence that medical tourism have happened thousands of years before that. (Mestrovic 2014.)

Ancient civilizations, like the Sumerians, believed in the strong connection between religion and medicine, so they have built several health complexes in the places of mineral water springs. Those were the first health pools. Later on, the same idea was behind Romans' first spas and mineral springs during the Bronze Age in the territories of modern Germany and Switzerland. In 872, the first hospital was built in Cairo, attracting thousands of visitors from all over the world. (Health-tourism: medical tourism made simple 2008 – 2015.)

In the 16th century, when yoga and Ayurvedic medicine became popular in India, people started to travel there to know more about new ways of medicine. In the Middle Ages, after the fall of Roman Civilization, Asia and Islamic cultures have been considered the places for medical tourism. In Japan healers used spring water to relieve pain and heal wounds. (Mestrovic 2014.)

Afterwards interest towards medical tourism shifted to France, and with the discovery of Roman baths elite classes started to come to visit Europe. The discovery of the New World brought a lot of new possibilities for medical

tourism along, making English and Dutch colonists learn more about medicine in other cultures. (Mestrovic 2014.)

Finally, medical tourism became an important part of European and also American travel, as there were high quality treatments offered both in Europe and the USA as early as in the 1930s. With the rise of price on healthcare in America in the 1980s and the 1990s, people started to arrange medical trips to all parts of the world. This was the true beginning of the boom in travel called medical tourism, which became more and more affordable and attractive. (Mestrovic 2014.)

4 DEVELOPMENT OF MEDICAL TOURISM

4.1 Increase in Popularity of Medical Tourism

The demand for medical tourism is growing constantly because people have a possibility to choose from a broader list of countries and hospitals to have their treatments. For example, medical care in the USA is very expensive, which makes Americans travel outside the country, for example to Brazil or Costa Rica, to have the same surgery at the cheaper price. Medical tourism allows customers to save up to 70% on medical care in other countries, which results in growth in the economic sector related to medical tourism up to 35% a year. That is why the number of countries that offer medical tourism possibilities is constantly growing, too. (Herrick 2007.)

Reasons for the increase in popularity of medical tourism are rather simple. Medicine is still very expensive in most of the countries. For example, prices on medical care in the developed countries like the USA, Canada, Japan, Germany or France are very high. That is why it is cheaper for the residents of these countries to go abroad to seek alternative treatments, where prices would be lower. (Modern Healthcare 2012.) The possibility to combine medical care and new experiences makes medical tourism even more attractive. The USA appears to be the most expensive country in the world in terms of costs for medical treatments. Fees for medicinal care in the USA are almost two times bigger than the fees for the same treatments even in Singapore. (Boyce 2013.) As an example of the difference in costs for certain procedures, kidney transplant surgery is a good one. This kind of procedure is in the top 10 of the most expensive ones in the USA and every tenth American has some issues with kidney. Such treatment costs between 40000 and 200000 dollars in the USA, when in Cuba it is exactly ten times less and costs only 4000 dollars. (Associated Press 2012). As for the differences in costs between the USA, Cuba and Russia, those differences are mentioned in the Table 1. For example, spinal fusion surgery costs 62000 dollars in the USA, whereas in Russia it is only 7500 dollars. In Cuba the price is even lower – 5500 dollars.

Table 1. Comparing Medical Treatment Prices (Runckel 2007)

Procedure	USA	Singapore	Russia	Cuba
Hip Replacement	\$24,000	\$15,000	\$3,200	\$3,000
Breast Augmentation	\$10,000	\$8,000	\$3,450	\$1,500
Spinal Fusion	\$62,000	\$9,000	\$7,500	\$5,500
Coronary Angioplasty	\$41,000	\$11,250	\$5,650	\$4,800

Long waiting times in medical institutions also makes people travel abroad in order to receive faster medical care. For example, countries with lowest waiting times in Europe are the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden. Finland and the United Kingdom have also reduced the waiting times for some treatments. And as it can be noticed from the Figure 2, in the USA and Canada waiting times continue to stay rather long.

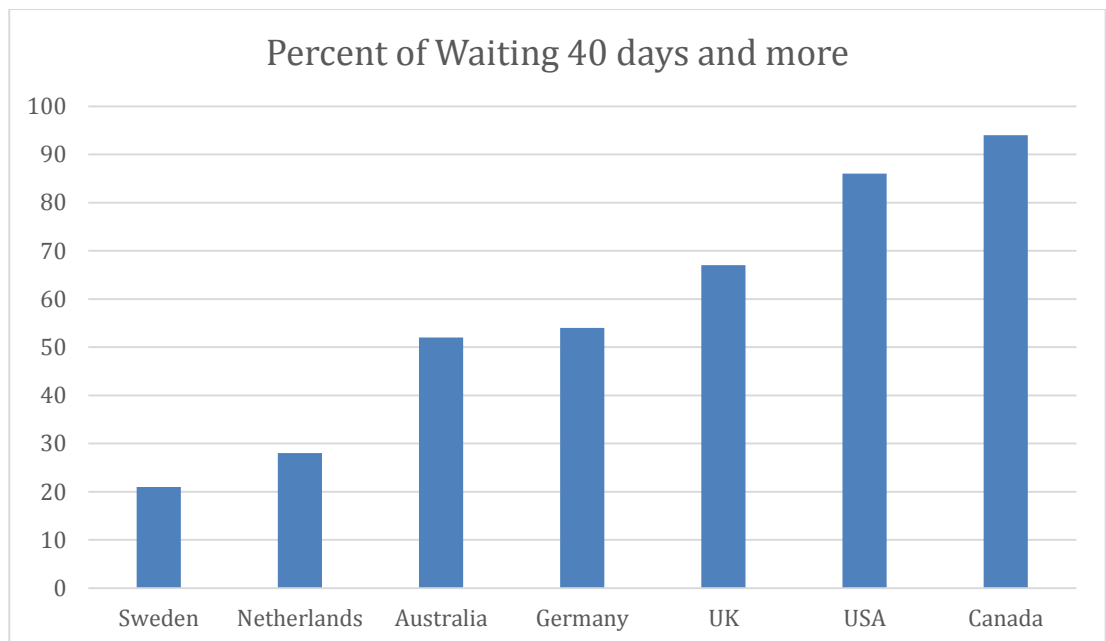


Figure 2. Waiting Times for Medical Treatments (Cihak, Matthews 2010)

Of course, the change in the ease and especially affordability of international travel has played its part in the increased popularity of medical tourism, too. Standards of technology and medical care have also been changing over the years. There are countries, like Cuba, which have never been the obvious choice for medical care. The shifts in the standards of medical care have made such countries more appealing for international patients. For example, due to those changes, Israel has become a very popular medical tourism destination over the last years. (The Richest 2013.)

For example, the leading factor for medical tourism in the UK is the avoidance of waiting times, when in the USA the main reason is cheaper prices for treatments abroad. Other reasons for medical tourism are better facilities and services on offer, access to the latest technology, better surgeon knowledge and also travel itself. (Healthbase 2007).

Medical perceptions towards medical tourism are not always positive. In the countries like the USA, due to the high standards of medicine, health tourism is considered to be risky. Some countries, such as India, South Africa or Thailand are considered to be very infectious, in comparison with European and North American countries. Surgeries that are performed abroad, and especially in India, Africa or Thailand, could weaken the whole patients' progress after the medical treatment and expose him to other diseases. The quality of treatment after surgeries also varies in different countries. The long flights back to the home country after serious surgeries could also affect the patients' health. The wrong treatment after surgeries could lead to complications, which might have not happened, if the patient had the surgery in the home country. (Mestrovic 2014.)

Medical tourism providers have developed a whole network with the cooperation of hospitals and other organisations of the same meaning. Nowadays there are numerous travel agencies all over the world that provide absolutely any type of treatment and assistance to the patients that want to go abroad for medical care. Just as an example, the biggest providers of medical tourism are German MEDIGO, American Ambassador Care, CubaHeal Medical Tourism Incorporation and Canadian Debson Medical

Tourism. Those are just examples of the very few medical tourism companies that provide medical tourism services.

Another quickly developing and popular part of medical tourism is circumvention. The circumvention is a type of medical tourism, where patients travel abroad to seek medical care, which is considered illegal in their native country, but is legal in their destination country. Examples of such illegal procedures are abortion, assisted suicide, reproductive technology, female genital cutting and so on. (Cohen 2011). The leading countries for circumvention tourism are China, Russia and the Caribbean. Those are the countries with new technologies in medical treatment, well-educated professionals and low costs for those desperately wanting to have a surgery that might be illegal in their native country (Snyder & Crooks 2015).

Figure 3 helps to put together the reasons for medical tourism in general. The most popular reason for travelling abroad to receive medical care is the more advanced technology in the destination country. The second reason is in the better quality of the procedures, making up to 32%. 15% of people choose a destination country because of the quicker access to the medical treatments. The less popular reasons are in lower costs for the medical treatments in the destination country.

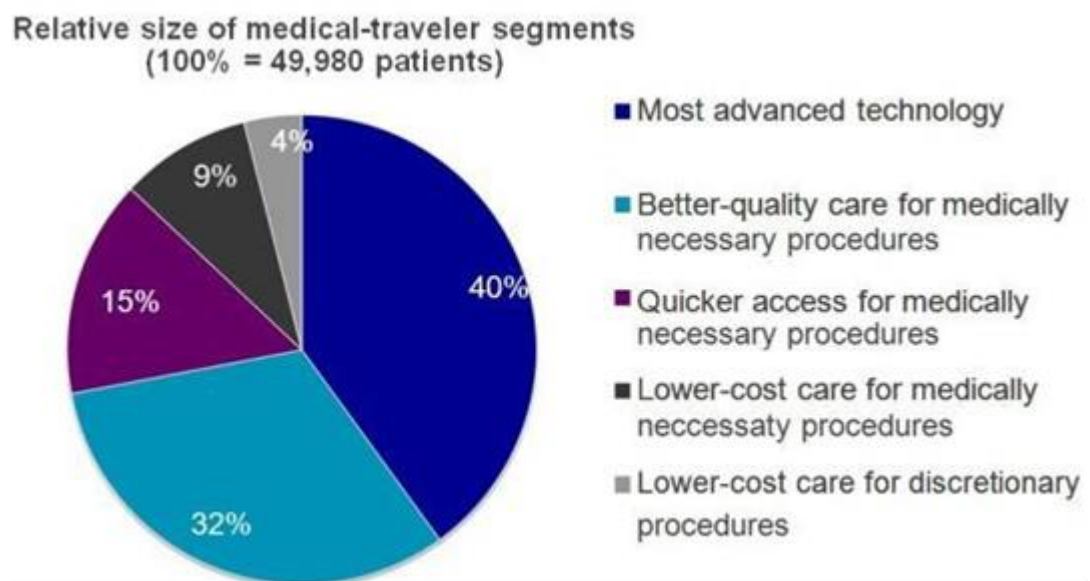


Figure 3. Main Reasons for Medical Tourism (Kelley 2013)

In addition, there are also several factors that make medical tourism easier and more affordable. There are many new medical organizations opening around the world. Both international and national legal systems are also slowly changing their attitude towards medicine. New types of communication systems, for example the creation of Internet, and the spread of English language as the main language for communication also play their part in the increase of popularity of medical tourism. The creation of international market for tourism services and the increase in the quality of life in different countries lead to the development of the international communication and cooperation, which also make medical tourism possible. (Lunt, Smith 2011.)

4.2 Sustainability in Medical Tourism

Medical tourism is nowadays one of the most rapidly growing sectors throughout the whole tourism industry. With its rapid growth there are both positive and negative impacts existing for the sustainable development of tourism in the region. The main reasons for medical travel are still lower prices, higher quality and quicker access to medical treatment that can be gained abroad. Therefore, as in any sector that develops sustainably there are three main factors to consider – social, environmental and economic impacts.

Social impact can be seen in the creation of jobs for local communities that offer medical treatments. This leads to the improvements in locals` quality of life and technological advances for the communities in comparison with the other ones in the region. In addition to that, medical tourism, along with the other branches of tourism, helps to bring skills to new places of the world and encourages education. The exchange of knowledge through medicine and tourism has crucial effect on the development of some of the poorer countries. (Loterio 2013.)

Negative effect of medical tourism on the area is the way locals treat foreigners that come to the region to seek medical care, as their way of life is very different and the quality is still lower. This all generates into negative relationships between medical tourists and locals that don't have that many opportunities for medical care. (Loterio 2013.)

Environmental impacts of the medical tourism are in the usage of natural resources of the region. Many tourism facilities, also medical ones, use natural resources to create leisure activities. This has a great effect on the sustainability, especially in the Latin American countries, where natural resources are very important also to the economic development. (Loteró 2013.)

As for economic impacts themselves, medical tourism helps bring money to the region. Many medical tourists tend to spend money not only on medical care but also on the activities outside. This means that medical tourists can often come with their families, and spend money also on hotels, restaurants, transportation and other similar services. (Jagyasi 2014.)

One of the main targets of sustainable tourism is to bring growth to the region where it is happening. Medical tourism helps to expand and develop both cultural and nature tourism (Jagyasi 2014). It does not only create new job opportunities and helps promote the region, it also has a significant impact on the economy of the region. This affects the development of tourism in the area in general. In order to make medical tourism sustainable all of the providers and organizers of medical care should work together to ensure that medical tourism brings mostly positive impacts to the region. (Loteró 2013.)

4.3 Destinations for Medical Tourism

It is hard to name the most popular countries for medical tourism, as every country specialises in something different from others. In overall, top destinations for medical tourism are Costa Rica, India, Israel, Malaysia, Mexico, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey and the USA (Rollandi 2014).

Popular destinations for cosmetic surgeries are Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba and Ukraine. In Bolivia, for example, more than 70% of middle and upper class women have had some kinds of plastic surgeries. Other countries with the large percentage of people having plastic surgeries are South Korea, Greece, Italy, Colombia, the USA and Taiwan. (Conley 2012.)

Table 2 shows the top 10 countries with the highest ranking in the quality of medical tourism in 2014. Five most compelling countries for medical tourism are Thailand, Mexico, the US, Singapore and India. This ranking consists both of governmental and private hospitals and practices. That is why Cuba is rarely among the top countries, as all of the treatments are run by government-owned hospitals and clinics. Russia, for that matter, is only at the 130th place in the world. This could also explain the popularity of medical tourism among Russian tourists.

Table 2. Best Medical Tourism Countries with the Number of Medical Tourists Arriving per Year (Rollandi 2014)

1. Thailand – 1.2 million tourists	6. Malaysia – 250.000 tourists
2. Mexico – over 1 million tourists	7. Brazil – 180.000 tourists
3. the US – 800.000 tourists	8. Turkey – 110.000 tourists
4. Singapore – 610.000 tourists	9. Taiwan – 90.000 tourists
5. India – 400.000 tourists	10. Costa Rica – 50.000 tourists

According to the information that was found during the content analysis, there were two groups of countries determined as the ones that often use medical tourism services. First group of countries refers to economically developed countries with medical services of high quality and with high costs, such as the USA, Canada and the UK, making up to 56%. The other group refers to developing countries with the low quality of medicine and its slow development such as CIS countries, which are for example Russia, Ukraine and Georgia, making up to 44%. (Dzhangirov 2011)

5 MEDICAL TOURISM IN CUBA

5.1 Cuban medicine

Cuba is one of the countries where private practices do not exist. All of the hospitals and clinics are run by government. The state of medical care in Cuba is one of the best in the Americas and probably in the whole world. Best time for Cuban medicine was, no doubt, when most of Cuban doctors either studied or had trainings in Soviet Union. Most of the equipment was also brought from Soviet Union. That is why Cuban medicine suffered a lot when Soviet Union fell apart. (Willems 2014.)

What is interesting about Cuban medicine is that it existed long before Spanish came to the region. After that, Cuban doctors have taken in the knowledge of both Spanish and Chinese doctors, which led to the creation of contemporary medicine. Cuba has had a lot of famous and world class doctors since the 19th century. As Cuba is one of the countries with the highest rates in medicine and life expectancy, which can be compared in the Table 3, it became a target place for medical tourism already in the 1950s. (Willems 2014.)

Table 3. Medical Rates Compared (The World Bank 2013)

	USA	Cuba	Russia	Finland
Life expectancy	79	79,1	69	81
Physicians (per 10.000)	25	67	43	29
Nurses (per 10.000)	98	91	85	109
Infant mortality rate (per 1000)	6	5	9	2
Maternal mortality (per 10.000)	28	80	24	4
Death due to HIV/AIDS (per 100.000)	2.20	2.25	36	0.06
Government expenditure on health as % of total GDP	17.7	10.2	6.5	9

Unfortunately, revolution took place in the 60s bringing the whole medical system down, as most of the doctors fled to the USA. As the result of revolution, Cuban medicine became available for large masses of locals. There were free medical treatments and free hospital beds provided to everyone, as hospitals became government-run. Due to that, mortality rates went down and the overall status of health in Cuba became one of the highest in the Latin America, not far behind from the USA and Canada. The most common reason of death in Cuba is not some disease, but death in accidents. Although major part of medical treatment is free of charge, there is still some medical care that patients have to pay for, as an example, dental and orthopedic care. However, patients with really low income still get everything for free, as the government pays their share to the medical facilities. (Willems 2014.)

Another interesting fact about Cuban medicine is that people rarely have access to drugs, pills and other medication, even not all of the doctors and hospitals have that access. However, Cuba is the second country in the world (after France) to begin the creation of computerized health register. The aim of this register is to help exchange medical knowledge between doctors from different countries in the world. It should also help keep Cuban medicine free for locals and increase the number of research and development projects. (Gubina, Koval 2014.)

Cuba is the country which provides a lot of doctors to the world, and statistic says that in Cuba there is a doctor for every 170 residents of the country. That is the second highest doctor to patient ratio in the world after Italy. Cuba provides more medical staff than any other developing country. That is quite strange, as doctors don't have that much income in Cuba as they would have anywhere else in the world. (Jacobs 2007)

Cuban medical personnel is a big part of country's economy. For example, Cuba sends its medical staff to Africa or to other regions with the military situation. Another example is the example of trade between Cuba and Venezuela. Cuban doctors treat patients in Venezuela, even Hugo Chavez himself, and in exchange for that Cuba gets oil. This exchange is a part of a

very important social program that wants to bring medicine to the poorest parts of Venezuela. (CUBAGood 2012 – 2015.)

As for medical tourism in Cuba, there are thousands of people annually coming to Cuba for medical purposes, which is shown in the Figure 4. Medical tourism brings around 40 million dollars to the country and makes up to 10 per cent of the country's GDP (Reisman 2014). Medical tourism in Cuba goes back 20 years ago, when medical tourists started to make regular trips to Cuba. There are special hospitals and clinics that serve only the purposes of foreign medical tourists.



Figure 4. International and Medical Tourists Arrivals to Cuba (The World Bank 2013)

5.2 Development of Medical Tourism in Cuba

The quality of medicine in Cuba may be one of the best in the world and free for its residents, but the treatments are not. Pharmacies are equipped very badly; there is a shortage in supplies. This goes back to 1961 when the USA put embargo on some of the goods imported to Cuba including medical supplies. Since then Cuba had to invest in research and development of own pharmaceuticals. Cuba, as a matter of fact, is one of the countries that

produce a lot of vaccines for export. The problem with Cuban medical system is that a lot of medical supplies that are made in Cuba go abroad. Only little part of them actually stays in the country. (Bose, Crassa 2009.) Another problem is that there is still certain inequality in getting medical help in the country. Medical care can be obtained for dollars whereas people which have only Cuban pesos don't have that many opportunities for medical care. This inequality can be seen also in the medical education in Cuba. Nowadays there are 70 594 doctors, 10 554 dentists and 25 022 medical assistants working in hospitals. After graduation, all of the students must first work in the governmental hospital. That is why many of the students try to leave Cuba after graduation to work somewhere else, as the salary in Cuba is very low. Despite that, Cuban medicine is unique in its own – Cuban doctors have their own vision on patients health, know medicines and effective methods of treatments. (CUBAGood 2012 – 2015.)

There are several big hospitals that focus on attending foreign patients and support medical tourism. The most famous and biggest company that specializes in medical tourism is Servimed Cuba. This company works in cooperation with the network of clinics and hospitals and travel agencies throughout the island. Servimed always provides medical treatments of the highest quality and quiet medical and health resorts. This company offers medical care options not only for businessmen and tourists with high income but also for budget medical tourists. (ServimedTurismo y Salud 2014). Other similar companies are HealthInCuba and CubaHeal Medical Tourism Inc., both located in Havana.

As for the hospitals that attend mainly medical tourists from abroad, there are a few most important ones. The number one resort famous among Russian medical tourists is Tarara, which is located in 15 km from Havana. This is a small village with medical centers and complexes which offers a variety of treatments. It is even called Russian village, as over half of the patients staying there are from Russian or Ukrainian descent. (Medvoyage.info).

Cira Garcia is the hospital famous among foreign patients from all over the world. It is located in the fancy part of Havana. Its main focus is on

physiotherapy and rehabilitation. Hospital pediátrico William Soler specializes in kids treatments for over 30 years now. It is well known for cancer treatment and heart diseases. This hospital is also among the ones that have conducted successful researches for treatments of Parkinson`s and Alzheimer`s diseases and cerebral palsy. The hospital Hermanos Ameijeiras is a surgical hospital which was opened in 1982. Although it is considered to be quite new, it has gained quite a reputation among foreign medical tourists. It has become so popular because of versatility of surgeries. Instituto de Medicina Tropical Pedro Kouri specializes in the treatments of diseases caused by tropical parasites. Here is the place where patients with HIV and hepatitis B are treated. Placental HistotherapyCenter specializes in skin diseases, whereas Frank PaisOrthopedic Hospital is one of the best orthopedic hospitals in the Americas. In fact, 9 of the 10 best orthopedic doctors in the world are working in Cuba and are of Cuban descent. (Moya lubimaya Cuba 2015.)

Even though the thesis must constitute a logical entity, you can begin writing at any point in the final text. You should begin writing as soon as you have assembled the material for a given chapter. Writing regularly makes writing a more routine task. You should develop a routine for writing and hold to it. A text always requires considerable revision and several versions. It is worth having an outsider read your text as you produce it.

5.3 Target Market

One of the main attractive points of Cuban medicine is its availability to the masses, also foreigners. Prices for medicine are rather low, in comparison with the one in Russia, the USA and Europe. Most of the medical tourists coming to the country are from Mexico and Argentina. Over the past years also Russian tourists, Canadians, residents of Venezuela, Europe and even the USA started to visit the country for medical purposes. (DoctorCuba). The share of medical tourists by country of origin can be compared by looking at the Figure 5.

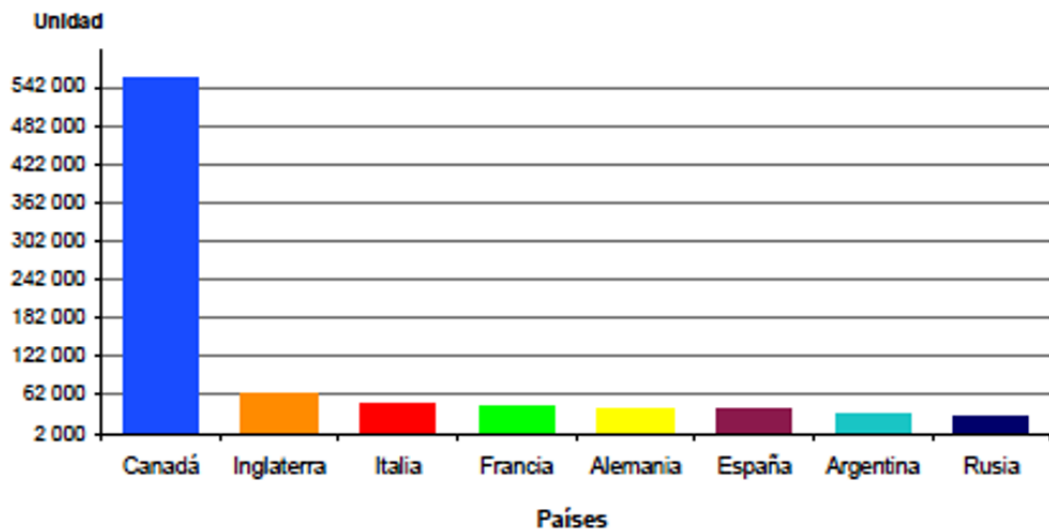


Figure 5. International Medical Tourists in Cuba by Country of Origin (Ritter 2011)

Although Americans are prohibited to visit Cuba as the consequence of the embargo in 1961, nowadays more and more Americans do that. Medicine in the US is considered to be the best in the world and the most expensive one. That is why residents of the USA often break the embargo terms to get cheap and qualitative medical care in Cuba. One of the main products that Americans come for in Cuba is medicine for cancer. (Pasca 2009.)

Some parts of Cuban medicine are way ahead of Canada and the USA. It can be seen in the infant mortality, life expectancy rates and number of doctors. Most of the Cuban hospitals have certifications that there is a hygiene, security and environment in a good shape. Not even all of the hospitals in developed countries meet such criteria. That is the reason why Americans and Canadians come to Cuba. Another factor is that Cuba is only a couple-hour flight away, which makes it easy to get there. (Neuman 2015.)

Even famous people go for medical treatment to Cuba. As it was mentioned before, Hugo Chavez, president of Venezuela is the most frequent patient in Cuban hospitals. Another famous person to attend Cuban hospitals is the famous Argentinian football player Diego Maradona. In addition to them a lot of Latin American celebrities do the same thing. Also Cubans living in Miami, the ones that have fled the country during the revolution, also go back to their

home country for cheap and qualitative medical care. A good example of the use and popularity of Cuban medicine can be seen in the documentary movie shot by Michael Moore. It shows the real situation of medical care in the USA and compares it to the one in Cuba. (Calcines 2014)

The reason why even celebrities and politicians prefer to receive medical treatment in Cuba is simple. Cuba has excellent doctors and high quality medicine. But besides that, Cuba is a secure country for the government representatives like Hugo Chavez, for example. The decisive factor is that Cuban government controls all of the media, so celebrities do not have to worry about their own privacy. (Landis 2014).

5.4 Medical Services on Offer

There are a lot of different medical services on offer in Cuba to choose from. As it can be seen from the text above, Cuba is the country with a very well developed medical care. This means that there are a lot of professionals in different areas of medicine. However, there are some parts that are special to the medical system in Cuba and are the main reasons for medical tourism in the country. (ServimedTurismo y Salud 2014.)

As it was mentioned before, Cuba has invested a lot into researches of such diseases as HIV, cancer, Parkinson`s and Alzheimer`s diseases. What is interesting is that Cuban doctors have managed to treat all of those diseases quite effectively. This happens due to the fact that preventive medicine and early diagnosis are the key factors of Cuban medicine. It means that a lot of diseases are recognized at early stages, which helps Cuban doctors find accurate and effective treatments. (Mednapravlenie 2015.)

Other areas of medicine that are well developed in Cuba are multiple sclerosis, psoriasis and other skin diseases. Two more specialties of Cuban medicine are cosmetic surgery and treatment from different addictions (Medvoyage.info). Cuban medicine gives tourists a chance for examination, diagnosis and treatment of infertility and other genetic diseases. Transplantation is also a very successful branch of medicine in Cuba, especially in terms of marrow and kidney transplants. Cuban

ophthalmologists have experience in cataract and cornea transplantations (Mednapravlenie 2015).

Cuban herbal medicine is another part of medicine which became popular among tourists, as it is unique in its own. Some of the herbs that are used in herbal treatments grow only in Cuba. That is why many medical tourists come specifically to Cuba for some facial and body treatments. (Mednapravlenie 2015.)

6 MEDICAL TOURISM IN RUSSIA

6.1 Quality of Russian Medicine

There is hardly much medical tourism going on in Russia itself. However, it is rather common for patients to seek medical treatments abroad. One of the main reasons why medical tourism in Russia is weak is the bad quality of services and not the absence of qualified personnel. Progress could be achieved by creating common practice where hospitals and clinics would work together with tour operators to create necessary conditions for the growth of medical tourism in Russia. (Shekin 2013.)

There is the perception that medicine during USSR times was better, more efficient, and it was free. It seems like the situation with medicine was the same as it is in Cuba now. In modern Russia medicine is good for those who are willing to pay. Free medicine, on the other hand, is of very bad quality. (Gagina 2013.)

However, there are a lot of qualified and very professional doctors that come from Russia, although most of them work either abroad or in private hospitals and clinics. By the way, private hospitals and clinics make up for 10% of all hospitals in the country. So to say, there are around 6.5 thousand hospitals in the country, and there are almost 100 hospital beds for each 10000 patients. There are approximately 707 thousand doctors in Russia. (Shekin 2013.) Russian doctor to patient ratio is rather good – it takes 3rd place in the world (230 patients per one doctor). As it can be seen from Table 4, Cuba is the first country in terms of doctor to patient ratio, meaning that there are 170 patients per doctor in the country. Belarus and Belgium take second place; Russia shares its third place with Greece.

Table 4. Doctor / Patient Ratio (Jacobs 2007)

Country	Doctor to patient ratio
Cuba	170
Belarus, Belgium	220
Greece, Russia	230

According to the World Health Organization, Russia takes only 130th place in terms of effectiveness of medical system, and 127th in terms of population`s health. According to the Analytic LevadaCenter, situated in Moscow and specializing in medical studies, only 20% of Russians are satisfied with the quality of medicine in the country. (Yakovleva 2014.)

Russian political and economic situations also have effect on the development and state of Russian medicine. For example, Russia spends even less money on medicine than countries with lower GDP – such as Costa Rica, Cuba, Lithuania, Turkey and Chile (Usov 2011). North Caucasus seems to be the most developed region in Russia, whereas in Central Russia the state of medical care is very poor. The overall state of medical development of Russian regions can be seen in the the Figure 6, which presents the most developed regions, marked with dark grey. Most of Russian regions are medically well developed. However, there are big regions in Ural and Siberia left unmarked, where medical development rate is very low. The main reason for such a condition for Russian medicine is the financial part of it. Although government seems to allocate quite a lot of money into medicine, most of them don't find their way to medical institutions.



Figure 6. Medical Development of Russia by Regions (Lebedev 2013)

6.2 Reasons for Medical Tourism

Medical treatments abroad, joint with the tourism side of it, are not the new trend for Russian community. For many Russians medical tourism is the only option to change their health for better. As Russian medicine is not that effective in the last years and the right diagnosis is nowadays a rare thing, many people travel abroad. For many people such things as treatments in Israel or visits to German clinics are common things. Taking into account the quality of medical care and professionalism of Russian doctors, patients tend to lose trust in hospitals and clinics. Even not so wealthy Russians try to get medical care abroad. Medical tourism for Russians combines both high quality medicine and also tourism related attractions. There are a lot of companies that organize such trips, helping with all of the documentation, bookings, transfers and any kind of assistance. (Lebedev 2013.)

Medical tourists in Russia could be divided into three categories. The first group of them relates to people that do not care about the price of the tour. They choose to travel abroad for medical purposes because of high medical quality and services in the countries of question. For example, they go to Israel for expensive cosmetic dental surgeries just because they are of a very high quality. (Shekin 2013.)

The second group consists of travellers seeking medical care at affordable prices. As an example, Russian tourists go to Cuba, Turkey and Ukraine for plastic surgeries because prices there are much cheaper than in the USA or Canada. Profitability of such medical tours can be counted as follows: $(T + L + MS) < R$, where T is travel costs, L living costs, MS – cost of medical care for foreigners in the selected region, and R is the cost of medical care in the place where tourist constantly lives. And the third group of travellers consists of people that seek medical care that cannot be provided by their home country. (Shekin 2013.)

As the result of the content analysis of different internet resources, there are several conclusions that can be made. Russians go abroad in two cases – when they are not satisfied with the quality of offered medical services in Russia and when their diseases cannot be treated in Russia. The most popular treatments among Russians are oncological, cardio and orthopaedic treatments. The most popular countries for medical tourism are Germany and Israel, although there is a growing popularity for such tourism in Turkey, Thailand and Singapore due to the low costs on medical treatments and accommodation. (Shekin 2013.)

There are four models of medical tourism existing in Russia. First one is a model of independent medical tourism, which can be illustrated as doctor – patient – doctor. The second one is a model of inbound medical tourism, doctor – patient – tour operator – doctor. The third one is an outbound medical tourism model, doctor – tour operator – patient – doctor. The last one is a model of the whole medical tourism cycle, doctor – tour operator – patient - tour operator – doctor. Nowadays, first and third models exist in Russian medical tourism. In order to realize the fourth one there is a need for creation of medical tourism clusters in cooperation with international companies. (Shekin 2013.)

6.3 Countries for Medical Tourism

Most of Russians prefer Germany and Israel for medical tourism. Germany is the country for wealthy medical tourists. It is the country for patients that do not care about the cost of medical treatments, but believe in German quality,

responsibility of medical personnel and comfort. Medicine in Israel, on the other hand, is more procurable. It is also known as the country with good emergency medicine, which means that Israeli doctors are the best with bad and even, to some extent, lost cases. Prices are way lower than in Europe, and there are a lot of services available in Russian, which is very important for Russian tourists. Around 30 thousand Russian patients come for treatment to Israel; approximately 80% of them are oncology patients. (Kogan 2012.)

All of the countries have their own specialties when it comes to medicine. Besides Germany and Israel, Russians choose few more countries for different treatments and possibilities of medical care. Cuba, Brazil, South Korea and Costa Rica are the countries Russians go to for plastic surgeries. Cuba is also popular among cancer patients and those looking for eye surgeries. Republic of South Africa, Costa Rica and Philippines are popular among dental patients, whereas Costa Rica along with New Zealand is also a destination for rehabilitation after surgeries. China is great for heart treatments, neurology and stem cell therapies, South Korea and Thailand for organ transplantation. (Latov 2007.) New Zealand is also a good destination for prosthesis treatments, Singapore and Thailand for treatments of heart diseases and dietetics. Bulgaria, Czech Republic and Switzerland, on the other hand, are very well known for wellness and spa tourism. (Cuba – medical tourism 2012.)

However, although all of the destinations and countries mentioned above are the leading ones among masses of Russian medical tourists, it does not mean that all Russians go only there. There are many individual tours organized to any country of the world through numerous organizations that provide medical tourism options.

6.4 Russian Medical Tourism Statistics

There is no concrete statistics about medical tourism in the world market. So, the growth in popularity of medical tourism can vary between 500 thousand up to 10 million people a year. There are no doubts about one issue – medical tourism popularity is going up. According to the data from Global

Spa Summit, capacity of medical tourism market is approximately 50 billion dollars, whereas the one of wellness tourism is even higher – 106 billion dollars (Savelyev 2014a).

It is interesting how people make decisions on where to go for medical care. The decision making of Russian tourists on the destinations is illustrated in Figure 7. 46% of patients` choices are based on their search in the Internet. 27% make decisions based on the opinion of those they trust. 11% rely on the information gained from travel agencies and tour operators. 8% rely on the information from booklets and free advertisement. 5% believe the information from TV and magazines, 3% rely on the information found in social media. (ProHotelia 2011.)

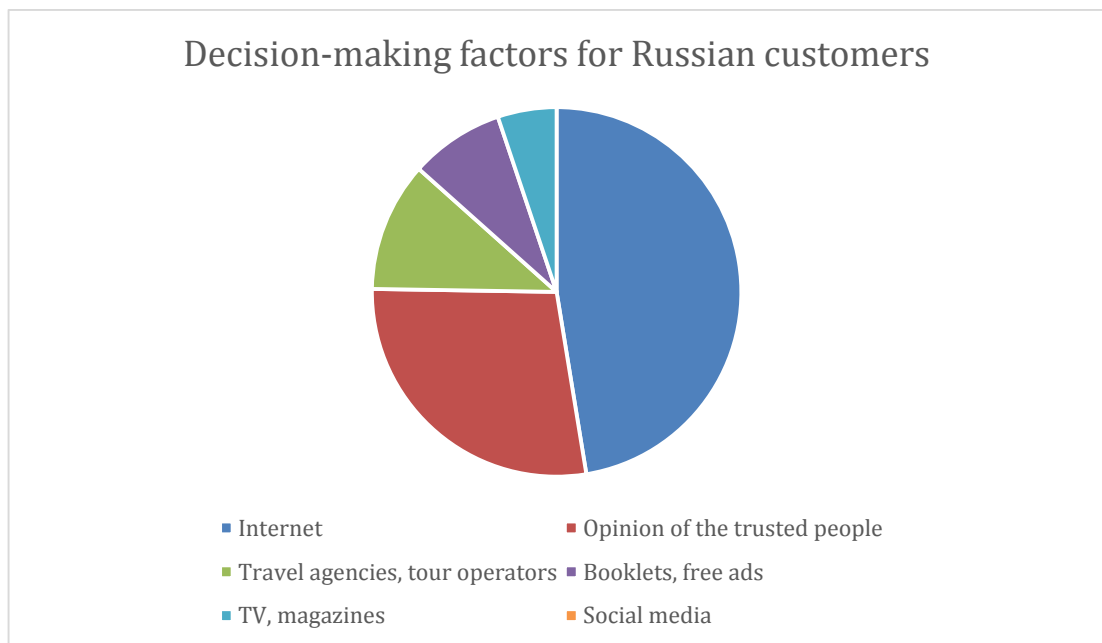


Figure 7. Factors Affecting Decision-Making of Russian Tourists. (ProHotelia 2011)

Absolute leaders in the numbers of medical tourists are the USA with 1.6 million people annually. Russians make around 10 million medical trips a year, spending 3.8 billion dollars on that. That makes Russia number 17 in the world ranking of medical tourists` countries. Leaders in spending money on medical care are also Americans, Germans being second and Japanese third. The cost of one medical trip for Russians is between 7400 and 15800 dollars. (Kogan 2012.)

Another interesting fact about Russian medical tourism is that there are 6 times more patients going for medical treatment abroad rather than getting it inside the country. In European Union, with no borders between countries, medical tourism within the borders makes up to 77%. Wellness and medical tourism make up to 14% of the whole tourism for Russians, with 33% for beach tourism, 30% business tourism, 20% cultural tourism and 3% for other kinds of tourism. (Savelyev 2014a.)

Around 4,5 million Russians go to local hospitals and wellness resorts, whereas 2,5 million go abroad. According to the data of 2013, the number of medical tourists going abroad has grown 24%. Financial amount of spent money on medical tourism has grown 13%. (Savelyev 2014b.)

7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

The aim of the research was to find out, whether there is an interest towards Cuba as a destination for medical tourism among Russian tourists. Another aim was to find out, whether Russians already exist in the Cuban medical tourism market and if not, how to attract them there.

There were various techniques used to find that information, such as content analysis, questionnaires sent both to Cuban and Russian companies, real life examples of Cuban medical tourism were used as a part of case study of the topic, and there was survey made among citizens of Saratov. On the first stages of this research there was a content analysis put up to understand, what is known about medical tourism in general. As the sources for content analysis, different online sites were reviewed in three languages – English, Russian and Spanish. Also forums, discussion boards, articles and academic sources were used to analyze content.

As for the survey, it is very hard to get necessary information about medical tourism using this tool. It is almost impossible to conduct surveys among large groups of people because medical tourist groups are formed spontaneously, information about medical patients is confidential in most of the cases and it is hard to find medical tourists among regular ones. That is why there was conducted a survey on the intentions of the potential medical tourists.

Case study is a very good tool for conducting such type of research because it helps to learn more about different people's opinion towards medical tourism. There were two types of cases used in this type of research method. One of the cases was with the positive outcome of medical tourism (good service and treatment), and the other one with negative (worsening of health and financial losses).

The most common method used nowadays is online research, which is Internet research that focuses on gathering information from different internet sources. Internet research helps gather free information, which is instantly accessible and focuses on the exact topic that is being researched. Another

research method is online interviews. And as it becomes clear from the name, this type of research is based on information that is being gathered through interviews that are conducted in internet.

8 EVALUATION OF DATA

8.1 Questionnaire

As it was mentioned above, there was a questionnaire made, which was sent both to Cuban and Russian companies operating in medical tourism. There were predefined, set questions and answers to choose from.

The recipients of this questionnaire in Cuba are listed in the Appendix 2. All of the companies that were questioned are related to the tourism industry or medical tourism. Among the recipients there were tour operators, travel agencies, hospitals and clinics. Altogether, there were 56 companies involved from the Cuban side.

There were several results gathered through the questionnaires that were sent to Cuban companies. 75%, 42 companies out of 56, said that medical tourism is popular in general. 68%, 38 companies out of 56, think that Cuba is a popular destination for medical tourism. 43%, 24 companies out of 56, said that there are many Russians coming to Cuba specifically for medical reasons. The results are illustrated in Figure 8.

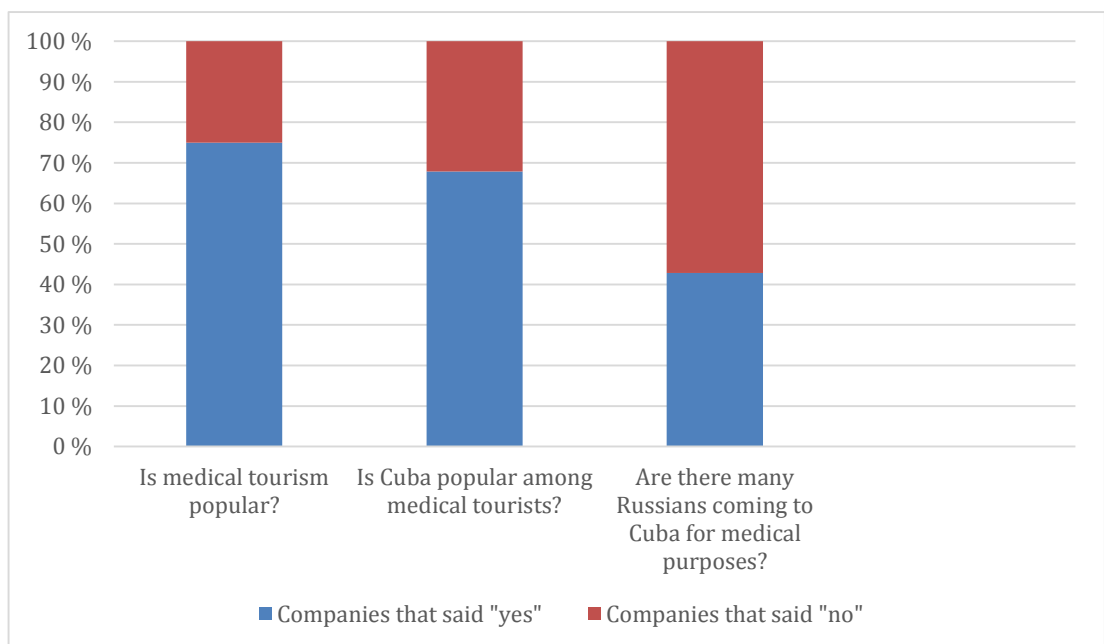


Figure 8. Results of the Questionnaire Sent to Cuban Companies

As for Russian companies, there were also 56 tourism related companies chosen for the questionnaire. The reason was choosing exactly 56 companies was to match the number of Cuban companies to follow the results easier. The chosen companies are the largest tour operators, travel agencies and organizers of medical tourism in Russia.

After the analysis of the results of the questionnaire sent to Russian companies, there were following numbers gained, illustrated in Figure 9. Altogether, 78% of Russian companies, 44 companies out of 56, think that medical tourism is popular among Russians. 14%, only 8 companies out of 56, said that Cuba is a popular medical tourism destination for Russian customers. However, 37,5%, 21 companies out of 56, said that their clients are interested in Cuba as a medical tourism destination.

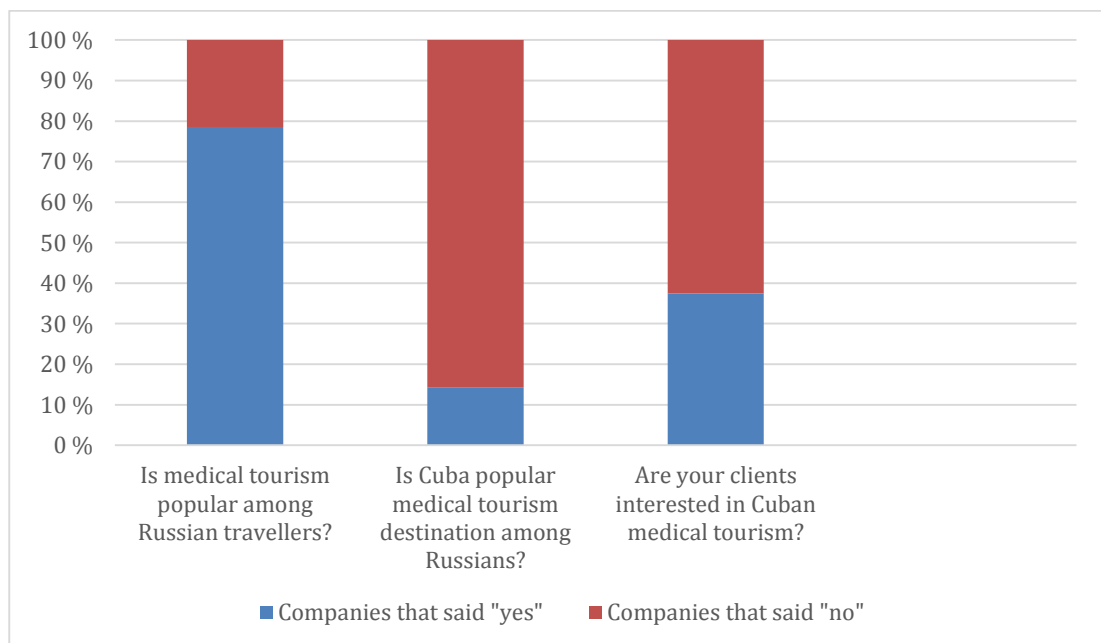


Figure 9. Results of the Questionnaire Sent to Russian Companies

From the results that were gathered from both countries, there could be drawn several conclusions. Both Cuban and Russian companies agree that medical tourism exists and that it is popular nowadays as a part of tourism industry. Whereas Cuban companies think that Cuba is a popular destination

for medical tourism, Russian companies do not agree, as there are not so many Russians in the overall statistics going specifically to Cuba for medical treatments. But for the medical tourism in Cuba, local companies think that there are still more than enough Russian medical tourists coming to the region. This could be explained by the sizes of both countries and the demographic statistics. Where there are not so many percentages of Russian travellers going to Cuba, in the Cuban statistics this number plays a significant part.

8.2 Information Gathered from Russian Companies

In practice, most of Russians going abroad for medical purposes are rather wealthy people. Reasons for the medical travel are individual in each case, but in overall it could be stated that people go abroad because there are no similar medical treatments in Russia on offer.

Medical tourism in Cuba sounds tempting to a lot of Russians, but not realistic. Most of respondents said that their clients would consider going to Cuba for medical treatments as a part of their general trip to Cuba. Combining stay in Cuba as a tourist and as a patient sounds like the most reasonable option for a lot of Russians. But only few of Russians would go precisely to Cuba for medical treatment, the main reason being the location of Cuba and the fact that it is far away and tickets are quite costly. Top 5 countries among Russians for medical travel purposes are Israel, Germany, Turkey, Thailand and Czech Republic. Those are the countries where Russians often and in big numbers go to medical treatments.

Based on the questionnaires sent to Russian companies that organize medical trips to Cuba, interesting individual responses from representatives of medical tourism industry were gathered. Olga Razumova, representative of the company RoyalMedGroup, which is located in Moscow, said that some medical treatments are relevant for Cuban medical travel. She said that Cuba has good detox programs on offer, along with weight loss programs, treatments of psoriasis and pigmentation problems. She also thinks that medical tourism in Cuba is quite limited because there are not so many travel agencies that offer Cuban medical treatments to Russians. According to her,

many Russians would like to combine leisure trips to Cuba with medical treatments.

The representative of medical tourism industry Valentin Kamyshko, sales manager in Dixon Healthcare Company located in Dusseldorf, also gave his opinion on the Russian medical tourism. He says that there is a definite need and demand in medical tourism. Otherwise, there would not have been so many companies that organize it. As he is working for a German company involved in medical tourism industry and offering medical trips to Russians, he thinks that the most popular country for Russian medical tourists is Germany. He was also quite definite saying that Cuba is not the strongest country for medical travel and that the clients of his company are not interested in going to Cuba for those purposes. Reasons for poor success of Cuban medical tourism, in his opinion, is low quality of medicine, low budgeting, lack of drugs and difficulty in getting there.

Another opinion came from Alexander Levitskyi from travel agency Visavis located in Krasnoyarsk. He says that medical tourism is constantly growing part of tourism industry and there is demand for it in the area. Among top destinations for medical tourism he named Czech Republic and Israel. Although he admits that Cuban medicine is of very high quality, unfortunately Cuba is quite far away to become popular among his clients.

As for the destinations for medical travel among Russians, it was able to come up with the percentages on the parts of the world, where Russians tend to go for medical treatments. This information is illustrated in Figure 10. Most of Russians choose Europe as a destination for medical tourism, making 35%. 31% of Russians prefer to travel inside Russia for medical treatments. 20% of Russians choose other parts of the world for medical tourism, such as the US, Latin America, Oceania or Africa. 14% of Russians prefer to go to Asia for medical tourism purposes.

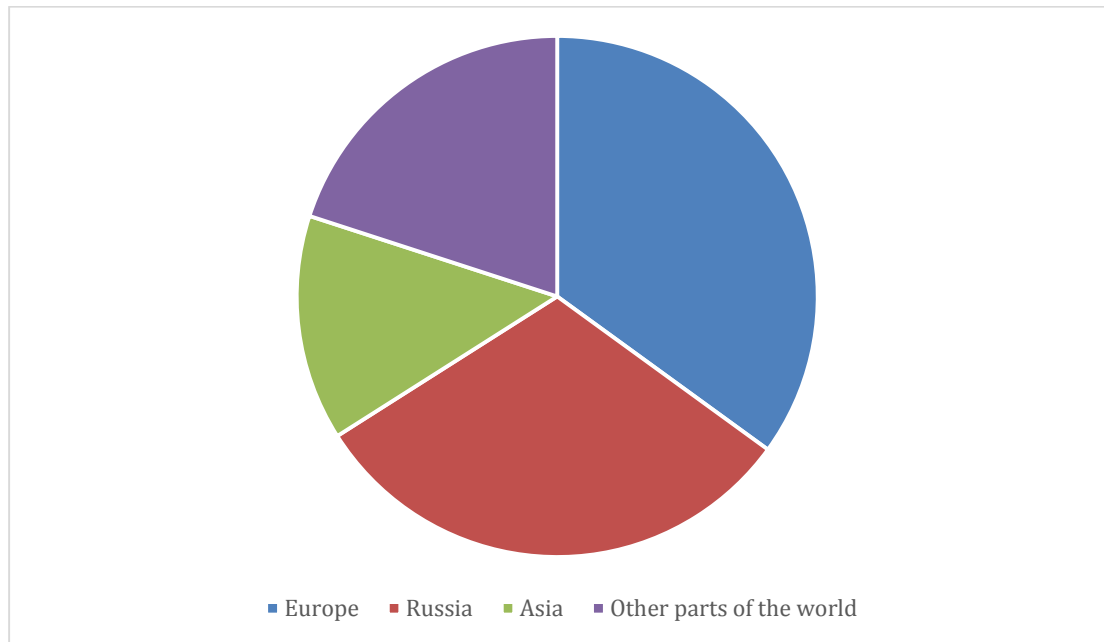


Figure 10. Parts of the World, Where Russians Go to for Medical Treatments. (ProHotelia 2011)

According to the information that was gathered after contacting various companies that organize medical tourism for Russian customers in Russia, there are certain conclusions that can be made. Medical tourism exists in Russia, but mainly as an outbound tourism, meaning that inside the country it is not well developed yet. Its development is very dependent on the demand from Russians, which is low at the time. In order to create medical tourism in Russia there is a need for activity from tour operators, which should use their knowledge, experience and opportunities to organize tours to medical institutions outside the country. However, such tour operators do not have to act abroad to their full abilities because there are enough tour operators in receiving countries, also in Cuba. However, there are some negative factors in the actions of tour operators when it comes to medical tourism, as they are not informed enough in the medical questions and cannot differentiate services of medical and, for example, therapeutic tourism.

8.3 Survey

For the survey, which was conducted in order to understand the intentions of Russian consumers, Saratov citizens were chosen as a group for survey. The commissioner for this thesis, MGP company has a lot of offices around the country. However, it was easier to conduct the survey in the author's native city with the help of the local MGP office. Saratov is a rather big city with 800000 citizens. People in Saratov region are very active in travel. Besides, it is not the capital or the second most important city in Russia, Saint Petersburg, where people have more money than in the other regions of Russia. It was interesting to gather information from middle-class residents of Russia rather than the ones living in the capital. The intentions and desires of people living in Saratov are closer to the overall intentions of Russians in comparison with the possibilities and desires of people living in Moscow or Saint Petersburg.

From the information gathered through survey, it was possible to come up with statistics on the intentions of Russian tourists, which are illustrated in Figure 11. The majority of Russians, 40%, do not want to go abroad for medical treatments and do not have money for that. 32% would like to go abroad for medical treatment but cannot afford it. 12% do not want to have medical treatment abroad at all. 6% would like to go abroad for medical tourism purposes and can afford it. 6% have already been abroad for medical treatments and would like to go again. 2% have already been abroad and do not want to repeat the experience. 2% of the recipients had trouble answering the survey.

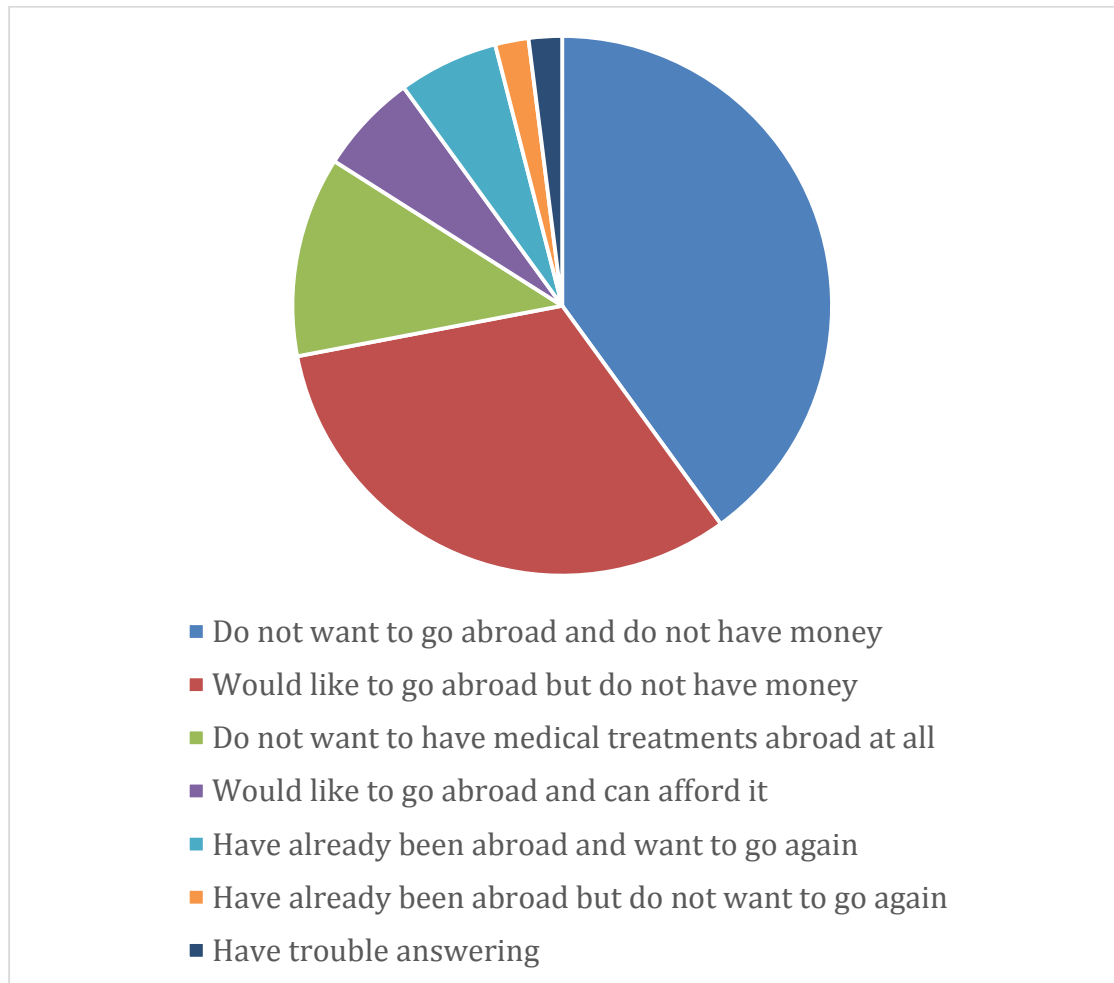


Figure 11. Intentions of Russians Towards Medical Tourism. Results of the survey

The analysis on the intentions of Russians towards medical tourism shows that most of the recipients would not have gone abroad for medical treatment and cannot afford, the second segment said that they would have travelled abroad to receive medical care, but do not have money to do that.

As it was already mentioned, there are three core reasons for Russians to travel abroad for medical treatment. The first one is clinical – need for treatment which cannot be held in Russian hospitals, or patient being sure that such treatment cannot be held in Russia. The second reason is financial – when the treatments in Russia and abroad are approximately of the same price, but treatments abroad are usually of better quality. There is even a formula to describe this situation, which goes like this: Treatment in Russia =

high-quality treatment + service abroad. The third reason is socio-psychological – it is a trend to have medical treatments abroad.

8.4 Information Gathered from Cuban Companies

Cuba is a very popular destination for medical treatments among Canadian patients. This is due to the fact that there are plenty of Canadian tour operators working in the country. The flight from Canada is very short and does not cost as much. Besides that, costs for medical treatments are very high, so many Canadians go to Cuba for medical surgeries, to buy medicine and to have diagnosis and consultations in Cuban hospitals.

Besides Canadians, there is some number of people coming from nearby countries and from Latin American countries – the most popular country where people come to Cuba from is Mexico. In addition to them, there are some German and British patients coming to the country. Russians also come for treatments to Cuba, making the second largest group of patients after Canadians and Latin Americans.

In 2015, Cuba is estimated to receive approximately 4 million tourists from different parts of the world. 800.000 of those tourists are medical tourists. According to the information gathered through questionnaires and survey, 12% of people living in Saratov region would consider going abroad for medical treatments. Those Russians are the ones who would like to go abroad for medical treatments and can afford it and the ones that have already been abroad for medical tourism purposes and would like to go again. This would make approximately 100.500 Russians only in Saratov region that would like to go abroad for medical tourism. Roughly speaking, that would make 17.5 million Russians in the whole country.

Based on the information gathered from Russian companies, 37.5% of Russian companies' clients would choose Cuba for medical tourism. That amount equals 6.5 million Russians that would choose Cuba as a destination for medical travel. Among 4 million tourists coming to Cuba in 2015, there are 144.000 Russians. 25.000 of those tourists are Russian medical tourists.

All of the statistics above are put up based on the information not only from the questionnaires and survey but also from the statistics of Russians arriving to Cuba. The Russian arrivals to Cuba are illustrated in Figure 12. Each year the amount of Russians arriving to Cuba grows by 17%. The estimated amount of Russians arriving in 2015 is 144.000 and in 2016, it is already 168.000.

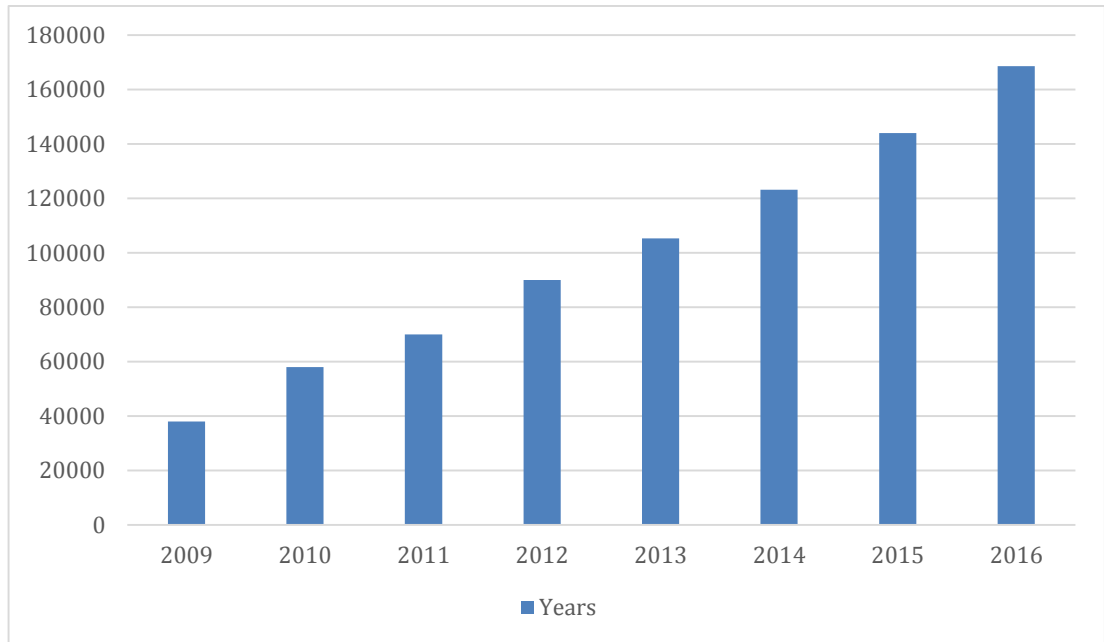


Figure 12. Cuban International Arrivals from Russia (100 dorog 2012)

8.5 Real-life experiences

As the part of this research, I have also contacted people who have experienced medical treatment in Cuba. I have found them with the help of MGP company, which is the commissioner for this research. I have interviewed them first via email and then by phone.

Natalia Radchuk from Saint Petersburg has had experience in the William Soler Pediatric Hospital where she was put with her young son. She claims that everything there was of high quality – starting with accommodation of young patients and up to medical personnel. Only contemporary medical treatments and equipment are used in the hospital, along with qualified doctors. Her son was diagnosed with a tumor in his brain, and Russian doctors only predicted 50% of success for the surgery. In Cuban hospital

they were assured, that only best doctors will take care of her son and gave 80% success to the surgery. Her son not only survived the surgery, but the tumor has gone. That was like a miracle to her family. She herself has witnessed the quality and state of Cuban medicine.

Elena Novikova from Moscow told about the experience with the treatment of her mother, who has struggled with her knee joint for a long time. Such surgery is very expensive in Russia, so the only reasonable option for them was to travel to Cuba, as it does not cost that much. She sent inquiries to several Cuban hospitals and the first one came from Frank Pais Orthopedic Hospital. In Russia, the queue for the surgery would take up to a year, whereas in Cuba it only took a month before they were put in the hospital for treatment. The service was surprisingly good – they were accommodated together with her mom and nurses took care of them 24/7. She says that it seemed like they were on a leisure trip and not in the hospital for a serious treatment. The whole process took only two weeks, and the results were astonishing. That way, she was more than satisfied with Cuban medical care.

Another respondent of the interview was Andrey Severinov from Murmansk, who visited a cardiocenter in Havana. His story was mostly about the equality of foreign and local patients. He said that although many assume that locals in Cuba do not get the same medical care as the ones who can pay and come from abroad, it is not true. His neighbor's uncle from a small village in Las Tunas had an emergency case which was treated very fast, and he did not even have to pay for it. He says that simple, ordinary medicine may suffer in Cuba. However, when it comes to emergency and last minute cases, in terms of medicine, there is no other country like Cuba.

8.6 Conclusion on the Findings

According to A. Radkov, the director of federal tourism agency Rosturism and representative of Russian tourism sector in Cuba, Russians are very interested in Cuba as the destination for their travel. Although there was an economic crisis in 2009, this did not affect the number of Russian tourists coming to Cuba, whereas the whole number of Russian tourists going abroad has gone down by 15%. This only confirms that there is interest from

Russian tourists and tour operators towards Cuba. The reason for such interest is a great job from the Cuban companies in the Russian market, as well as the significant number of flights existing to the island from various Russian cities. (Radkov 2010.)

Many Russians that are interested or familiar with the medical tourism say that Cuba would be the destination of interest, if only there was enough tours organized there and it was closer. There is nothing to be done in terms of Cuba being an island far away from Russia. However, there are certain changes that could be done in terms of organizing tour to the country. As statistics show, the quality of Cuban medicine is surprisingly high, and it is certainly worth a long-hour flight. Especially for the people that have tried all sorts of treatments both in Russia and in Europe. There are many tour operators that offer medical trips that could include Cuba in their lists. Another factor that could help attract even more Russians to the country is that there are plenty direct flights from Moscow, Saint Petersburg and some other cities. Many Cuban doctors speak Russian to some extent, and furthermore, there are many Russians living and working in Cuba as guides and representatives of different tourism related companies. If all of those factors could be put up in the common network, medical tourism for Russians would be much more attractive and easy. (Sputnik Mundo 2010.)

Medical services that are offered from both sides, being Russian tour operators and Cuban medical institutions, should also be revised. Structure of medical tourism services can be described like a process. This process begins with the qualified consultation which can be done in the medical tourism agency, Russian hospital or hospital abroad contacted online. The second step of the process is the diagnosis submitted by Russian hospital. The third step is the order of a medical tour through intermediary either in Russia or abroad. The fourth step is the confirmation or denial of the diagnosis made by hospital abroad. The last step of the process is the medical treatment itself. Following this model and advertising Cuba as the destination for medical treatments in the right way would bring success to both parties.

9 DEVELOPMENT IDEAS

Medical tourism is a rather new concept in tourism industry. It is very difficult to estimate the number of medical tourists in the world in overall and due to that, in specific countries, too. There is no systematic data available to trace medical travellers in the world, as not all of them go to a destination with one purpose – to get medical treatment. There are many people travelling abroad and getting medical treatments on the go or in the case of emergency. There are also many business tourists and regular tourists that come to destinations and seek medical care there, while they are abroad. As there is no information on the number of medical travellers, it is also hard to get any data on the amount of money invested in this field of tourism. What makes it even more difficult, there is no one clear definition for medical tourism or medical tourists, as those definitions vary from source to source, and they are not standardized. (Hadi 2009.)

What is known for sure is that medical tourism is constantly growing due to various factors that have been discussed in this thesis. Medical tourism is not a positive or negative part of tourism for economies. It is just something that is already spreading and gaining popularity among large numbers of people from all over the world. Although it was once a treat for people from more rich and developed countries, nowadays it is also gaining popularity among people with not so wealthy background. There is a variety of countries to choose from in terms of medical tourism.

As for Cuban medical tourism, there is a big potential for expanding it to new markets. However, the location of Cuba itself is a rather big obstacle, as it is situated far away from Europe, and there are no cheap or continuous flights to Cuba to make travel there easier for potential customers. Taking that into account, the only real option for Cuba stay the same – Canada, nearby countries and Latin American countries. Cuba could be a strong competitor for other countries if they strengthen some part of their medical treatments and focus on something specific. For example, as it was mentioned before, Cuba is famous for its oncology and skin disease treatments. Whereas skin diseases are not so crucial and could be treated somewhere closer to home,

oncology is something everyone in the world is concerned about. Making progress visible to other countries and especially to potential customers could bring masses of tourists that would not only come to Cuba for vacation joint with medical treatments, but would attract patients that would come precisely because of the quality of medical treatments in the country.

The same goes for Russia. Whereas Cuba is far away from Russia, it cannot attract enough people to discuss the strong cooperation between Russia and Cuba within medical tourism, at least not yet. Nowadays the situation in the region is unstable due to current economic crisis. Cuba is also under pressure with the current situation, as the USA is talking about cancelling or withdrawing embargo regulations, at least for some period of time. This could change the whole economic situation in Cuba and would most definitely attract masses of Americans to Cuban hospitals. This would mean that Cuba no longer has to seek patients somewhere in Russia or Europe. As medical costs are the highest in the world for American hospitals, this would lead to the increase of medical tourists coming from the USA to Cuba.

Despite the prognosis described above, Russian companies and tour operators that specialize in medical tourism are talking about the popularity of medical tourism in general and somewhat individual travellers going to Cuba for medical treatments. If Cuban medicine would be advertised and presented in the better way to Russian consumers, at least the wealthier part of Russian medical tourists would definitely consider going to Cuba for medical treatment. That would work, if Cuba was promoted as a country for unique medical procedures of high-quality.

As proposal, it is recommended to focus on specific parts of medicine to offer to Russian customers in Cuban medical institutions. In terms of geographical location, Cuba is far away from Russia, too far away to promote it as a destination for all kinds of medical tourism. There are such countries as Germany, Turkey and Israel that strongly occupy positions in the medical tourism market for Russian clients. Those are the countries where Russians would go even to get dental care, not talking about serious procedures. Cuba, on the other hand, specializes in specific treatments that Cuban

doctors do better than any other doctors in the world, so far. Those should be the fields to focus on when promoting Cuban medical travel for Russian tourists. Although travel expenses and time spent on getting to Cuba are rather high, they can be compensated by the high quality medicine and treatment of specific diseases like cancer or psoriasis, for example. Travelling to Cuba to get such medical care is worth money spent on getting there. In addition to that, costs for Cuban medicine are lower than the ones in Germany, for example, so this would also compensate the other expenses.

The results of this research are justified by multiple questionnaires that were sent both to Cuban and Russian companies, by different positive and negative feedback got from Russian medical tourists that have had treatments in Cuba. It is also justified by a content analysis that was conducted in different online sources and other materials.

Any scientific research and its results should be reliable and valid. The idea behind the reliability is that any significant results must be repeatable. Other researchers must be able to perform exactly the same experiment, under the same conditions and generate the same results. (Shuttleworth 2008) However, when it comes to the human factor and the research is conducted based on the human judgments, the results have to be questioned. There are different issues that could affect the opinion of the recipients. In the case of this particular research, there was a lot of research made through contacting people representing various companies. That is why the reliability of the research could be put under question. However, as there were random target groups created in both countries, the results that were received are similar among the respondents. This helps create the overall picture of the situation in the medical tourism from the point of view of the respondents of the questionnaire.

10 CONCLUSION

Medical tourism is indeed often confused with therapeutic or wellness tourism, although the status medical intervention in any of those types of tourism is different. This all is connected to the spread of roles in medical tourism of both tour operators and doctors. The strengthening of the role of tour operators leads to the commercialization of this type of tourism, but at the same time makes the quality of medical services rather low. On the other hand, the strengthening of the role of medical staff increases the quality of services, but does not always allow keeping the high quality of tourism related services.

As becomes clear from the research, Russia does not have that much inbound medical tourism, which results into increased popularity of outbound medical tourism. Although not so many people have funds to travel abroad to seek medical care, there is still constant interest towards that part of tourism. This only means that medical tourism is suitable for a small, random group of people that occasionally decide to go abroad for medical treatment.

Cuba is not one of the most popular destinations among Russian medical tourists, although there are plenty of regular Russian tourists on the island. However, Russians are well informed about the possibilities and advantages of Cuban medicine and its cheap prices, in comparison with the other countries. Another advantage of Cuba in the eyes of Russian medical tourists is in the specific medical treatments that could only be held there. For example, oncology and psoriasis are number one treatments that Russians are familiar with and have knowledge that they can be well treated in Cuba.

Therefore, Cuba may not be the number one choice for Russian patients, but it certainly is on the map of those who are familiar with the term medical tourism and want to get the best medicine they can at lower prices.

As a conclusion for the research and thesis itself, the chosen research methods proved to be effective. There was a lot of information gathered on the topic. Although not all of the information is strictly related to the main research question on the demand for Cuban medical tourism by Russian

consumers, the research question is answered anyway. Therefore, the overall results of the thesis correspond with the main research question.

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2. AC Travel
3. Akvarel Tour
4. All Travel
5. Anex Tour
6. Arkadia Tour, Ekaterinburg
7. Armida Travel, Saint Petersburg
8. Art Travel Studio
9. Biblio-Globus
10. Cash Tur, Saint Petersburg
11. Coral Travel
12. Danasko
13. Dream Land, Moscow
14. DSBW Tours, Moscow
15. Eto Tour, Moscow
16. Flagman Travel, Moscow
17. Gold Travel
18. GREEN PLANET Travel
19. Guayava tour
20. ICS Travel Group
21. INNA TOUR
22. InterGid, Moscow
23. IP Travel
24. Juzhnyj krest, Moscow
25. Kamensk Travel
26. Kariatida Travel Company, Moscow
27. Karibskiy Klub
28. KPK Tour, Saint Petersburg
29. Lazurnyi bereg, Chelyabinsk
30. Lechenie za rubezhom
31. May Tour
32. Mednapravlenie
33. Medvoyage.info
34. Mickey Travel, Moscow
35. Natalie tours
36. NTC Intourist
37. Pegas Touristik
38. Polar Tour
39. Royal Med Group, Moscow
40. RTI Russian Travel
41. RUSSO TURISTO
42. Sogdiana Tour
43. Sol de Cuba
44. Tez Tour
45. TPP Tour
46. Transaero Med Tour

47. Travelata
48. Troyka, Moscow
49. Union Travel
50. Vand International
51. Veter Stranstviy
52. Vis-à-vis, Krasnoyarsk
53. Vista, Saint Petersburg
54. Quinta Tour
55. ZagranLechenie
56. Zeus Travel

List of Cuban companies that have answered to the questionnaire:

1. Agencia de Viajes San Cristobal
2. All Ways Travel
3. Amistur
4. Autentica Cuba
5. Brugueira Medical Solutions
6. Centro de Histoterapia Placentaria
7. Centro de Investigaciones Medico-Quirurgicas
8. Centro de Rehabilitacion "Julio Diaz"
9. Centro de Salud "La Pradera"
10. Centro Iberoamericano para la Tercera Edad
11. Centro Internacional de Restauracion Neurologica
12. Centro Internacional Oftalmologico "Camilo Cienfuegos"
13. Clinica Central Cira Garcia
14. Colonial Tour and Travel
15. Coturca
16. CUBAGood.com
17. Cubalinda
18. Cubamar
19. CUBAmia.info
20. CUBANDHEALTH
21. Cubazul Tour & Travel
22. Cuba Tech & Travel
23. Cuba Travel Agency
24. Cuba Travel Network
25. Cuba TOP Travel
26. CubaTuCasa
27. Cubatur
28. DTCuba
29. Enridan Travel & Tours
30. Excelencias Travel
31. ECOTUR
32. Grupo de Turismo Gaviota
33. Havanatur
34. HealthInCuba
35. Hospital Clinico-Quirurgico "Hermanos Ameijeiras"
36. Hospital Ortopedico "Frank Pais"
37. Hospital Pediatrico "Juan Manuel Marquez"
38. Hospital Pediatrico "William Soler"
39. Huellas Operador Turistico
40. INFOTUR
41. Instituto de Medicina Tropical
42. Instituto Nacional de Oncologia y Radiobiologia
43. KobaTours
44. Marina Royal Tour
45. Oficina de Turismo de Cuba
46. Oki Travel
47. Paradiso

48. SaludTurismo
49. Servimed Cuba
50. S. I. Tours
51. Sol y Son Los Viajes
52. Solways Cuba
53. SuperCuba Travel
54. Travelnet Cuba
55. Universitur
56. Viajes Cubanacan