

Saint Lucia's Medical Tourism Sector

What is medical tourism?

Medical tourism occurs when patients travel internationally with the intention of obtaining privately funded medical care. Our research team, based at Simon Fraser University (in British Columbia, Canada), studies medical tourism from a number of perspectives.

What trends are occurring in Saint Lucia's medical tourism industry?

Located in Caribbean, Saint Lucia is an upper-middle-income island nation in the Lesser Antilles. Medical tourism in Saint Lucia remains at a nascent stage, although some view it as a natural fit for the Saint Lucian economy given the country's robust tourism sector, a primary revenue generator. The Medical Tourism Association recently held a conference in Saint Lucia advocating for the development of a medical tourism industry, although some question the feasibility of this sector given widespread economic turbulence across the country and difficulties in securing financial capital.

What our research is showing about the current state of medical tourism in Saint Lucia:

- Currently no dedicated medical tourism facilities exist in Saint Lucia *per se*, although one resort markets itself as a health and wellness destination with services such as yoga and massage. Additionally, there is one private hospital that holds international accreditation through Accreditation Canada, although it is unclear what, if any, percentage of their patients are medical tourists.
- There are currently several private offshore medical schools based out of Saint Lucia that are primarily attended by foreign students and financed through high tuition rates. One of these offshore medical schools is contemplating opening a medical tourism facility paired with an existing all-inclusive resort that could operate as training space for students at the medical school as well as a potential revenue generator.
- Our qualitative research in Saint Lucia has illuminated a widespread perception of impracticality regarding the potential development of a medical tourism sector on the island. Many cite an already overburdened health system and deteriorating health infrastructure as barriers to a successful medical tourism industry.
- The intraregional movement of patients already exists between Saint Lucia and neighbouring islands. Patients from smaller islands seek treatment in Saint Lucia for medical procedures unavailable at home, while Saint Lucians have similarly chosen to seek medical treatment elsewhere, particularly in regional destinations with more robust and established health care resources.

For more information: www.sfu.ca/medicaltourism/

Contact us: medtour@sfu.ca

© 2014, SFU Medical Tourism Research Group, British Columbia, Canada