

Understanding the Health & Safety Risks for British Columbian Outbound Medical Tourists

PICnet

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Introduction & Disclaimer

- My interest in Medical Tourism began when I attended an international conference entitled “Issues and Challenges in Research on the Ethics of Medical Tourism” in 2010.
- From that meeting I became involved in the SFU Medical Tourism Research Group and we applied for funding to facilitate the meeting held on Nov. 2011.
- This was a consultative meeting to learn more about the health & safety issues that could be potentially linked to medical tourism in BC.
- My involvement in this research is as an interested individual.
- I do not represent VCH.



OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION TO MEDICAL TOURISM



What is Medical Tourism?

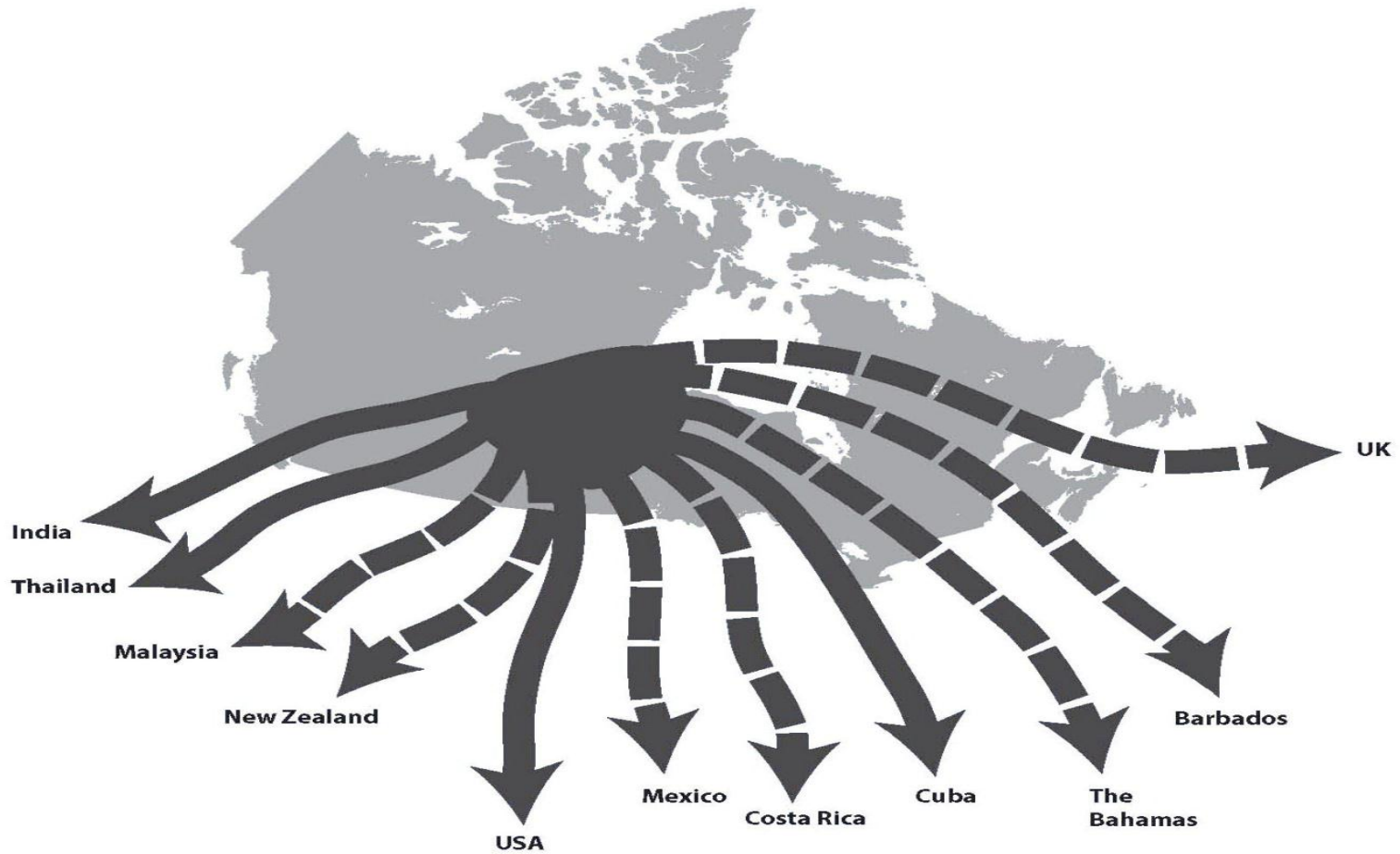


Medical Tourism for the purposes of this report

- When patients choose to go abroad to privately purchase medical care they are engaging in medical tourism
- A Medical Tourist is a patient who is paying out of pocket in another country to access medical care
- Medical tourism is distinct from *arranged* cross-border care
- as well as care administered abroad to injured vacationers
- We did not include
 - organ transplant;
 - sex reassignment;
 - or fertility treatments involving third parties.



Where are Canadians going?



Medical Tourism for the purposes of this report

- Most people taking the medical tourist route are having less sensational everyday surgeries that can require a lot of expensive follow up care:
 - hip surgeries
 - knee surgeries
 - spinal surgeries
 - heart surgeries
 - plastic surgery and
 - some dental surgeries.



**AFTER THEIR DIAGNOSIS..... PEOPLE
OFTEN SEARCH THE INTERNET**

WHAT ELSE IS AVAILABLE?

IS THERE AN ALTERNATIVE?



There are sites that list surgical wait times such as MOH
<http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/swt/>

Ministry of **Health**

Surgical Wait Times

Welcome to the new Surgical Wait Times Website!

This new website is designed to offer you more information about wait times for elective surgical procedures in British Columbia for adults aged 19 and older. For information on how to use this site please click on the "How Do I Search?" link below.

B.C. Children's Hospital and Pattison Outpatient Centre have been added to the list of facilities for which surgical wait time information for elective surgeries is being posted. Note that since this website only reports on adults, the data reported for Children's Hospital also only includes cases aged 19 and over.

Wait times are calculated on the basis of the previous three months of completed cases. A small number of procedures performed in addition to a number of urgent cases performed can result in a calculated wait time that is not reflective of the current patients' wait time.

BC Cardiac Registry is currently in the process of implementing a new information system and at this time they are still in the validation process. As a result they were not able to submit data for Open Heart Surgery and Coronary Artery Bypass Graft for inclusion in the current update of the website.



In BC Knee replacement surgery could mean a wait of up to a year; depending where you live

Results for: Knee Replacement in all facilities

Day Surgery Inpatient **All**

| Procedure / Health Authority / Facility / Specialist | Cases Waiting as of | Cases Completed | |
|--|---------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | | 50% Received Services Within (weeks) | 90% Received Services Within (weeks) |
| Surgical Patient Registry | 31-Mar-2012 | From 01-Jan-2012 To 31-Mar-2012 | |
| Knee Replacement (B.C.) | 4038 | 17.6 | 37.0 |
| Abbotsford Regional Hospital and Cancer Centre | 114 | 22.6 | 38.0 |
| Burnaby Hospital | 164 | 25.0 | 36.9 |
| Chilliwack General Hospital | 33 | 5.7 | 9.6 |
| Eagle Ridge Hospital | 40 | 39.3 | 45.0 |
| Langley Memorial Hospital | 93 | 15.1 | 28.6 |
| Peace Arch Hospital | 68 | 15.3 | 34.3 |
| Ridge Meadows Hospital | 23 | 7.7 | 38.1 |
| Royal Columbian Hospital | 34 | 30.1 | 56.2 |
| Surrey Memorial Hospital | 304 | 28.1 | 39.5 |
| East Kootenay Regional Hospital | 62 | 16.0 | 33.8 |
| Kelowna General Hospital | 222 | 15.6 | 35.9 |
| Kootenay Boundary Regional Hospital | 89 | 14.7 | 32.5 |
| Penticton Regional Hospital | 75 | 13.1 | 22.0 |
| Royal Inland Hospital | 303 | 35.4 | 55.4 |
| Vernon Jubilee Hospital | 305 | 31.3 | 68.4 |
| Dawson Creek and District Hospital | 11 | 9.4 | 19.0 |
| Kitimat General Hospital | < 5 | 22.9 | 43.5 |
| Prince Rupert Regional Hospital | < 5 | 3.7 | 8.6 |
| The University Hospital of Northern British Columbia | < 5 | 20.0 | 40.7 |



From there it's a quick click to.....

HOME SURGERIES ORTHOPEDIC PLASTIC OBESITY DENTAL GENERAL GYNECOLOGY CARDIOVASCULAR KIDNEY

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Kidney Transplant Surgery
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Dental Surgery
Our dental center in Costa Rica

Aesthetic & Plastic Surgery
Plastic surgery involves the



Or to



Spotlights



Why we wrote about medical tourism in Mexico City

Great questions the Chicago Tribune advises you to ask if you are considering medical travel.



Taiwan prepares for influx of mainland Chinese medical tourists

Tourists from mainland China will from now on be allowed to visit Taiwan for the express purpose of medical tourism, the National Immigration Agency announced Jan. 3.



Healthy sperm: Improving your fertility

Understand how lifestyle factors can affect your sperm and what you can do to improve your fertility. [Read More](#)

News and Events



30 May

Free Market Babies and Reproductive Tourism.

Donna Dickenson takes a look at the struggle nations face when deciding how to regulate reproductive tourism. Difficult questions are raised about reproductive rights and obligations. [Read More](#)



27 May

How medical tourism can help Europe fight chronic obesity

How medical tourism can help Europe get a grip on its obesity epidemic. [Read More](#)



17 May

Dads band together

Members of the Gay Dads Alliance in Australia promote and provide information on how gay couples can become parents. [Read More](#)



26 April

"I can't afford surgery in the U.S."

A story on how one man flew to the U.K. for surgery and why many, many more are traveling abroad for healthcare. [Read More](#)

Surrogacy NewsLetter

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They probably don't notice.....

“Teen's kidney-for-iPad swap stuns China”

17-year-old told mother he sold organ to afford Apple devices

The Associated Press Posted: Apr 7, 2012 8:01 AM ET

As they are looking for other surgeries.....



What's information is available in newspapers?

As well as the previous news item about the kidney donor this month there has been:

“International shortcut to surgery; Interest in treatment abroad is taking off as a way to avoid wait lists for procedures”

– By Elaine O'Connor, The Province April 8, 2012

“Researchers want Feds to Track Canuck Patients”

– By Graham Templeton, Vancouver Metro April 10, 2012



OVERVIEW OF CONSULTATION MEETING NOVEMBER 2011



Aim of meeting

What has been observed by professionals involved in

- Patient Safety
- Health
- Risk Management

as a result of British Columbians involvement in Medical Tourism



Consultation Meeting November 2011

Seven stakeholders attended, representing the health and safety domains of:

- Blood safety
- Tissue banking
- Health records
- Dental care
- Organ transplantation
- Infection control
- Clinical ethics

Five stakeholders represented offices that were Provincial in scope



Meeting Overview

- The meeting ran for four hours.
- Two informational presentations
 - general trends and issues in medical tourism, including common health and safety concerns, and
 - published reports of negative health outcomes from medical tourism.
- A series of open discussion questions were posed by the meeting facilitators and discussed at length.
- Ended with a brainstorming session regarding intervention priorities and other recommendations for addressing the health and safety risks identified.



HEALTH & SAFETY ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY PARTICIPANTS



Potential for Medical Complications

- Lax procedures
- Exposure to infections
- Complications due to pre-existing health conditions
 - Compromised or exacerbated due to lack of medical history
 - Stress of travel
 - Drug interactions



(Un)informed decision making

- Where do patients obtain all the information needed?
- How can an informed decision be made without the information?
- How can they give informed consent for the surgery?
- How reliable are testimonials in marketing materials?
- Who do they ask about the risks involved?



Transmission of Infection via Transplant

- What is the organ donor selection criteria?
- Is there adequate screening for
 - HIV
 - Hepatitis
 - Other infectious diseases



Antibiotic-resistant organisms

- Destination facility may expose patient to antibiotic-resistant organisms

2010

NDMI-1 spread from an Indian hospital to various countries including Canada



Personal Safety at Destination

Political or social instability at the destination may pose a threat to personal safety



(Dis)continuity of Care

- No record of Treatment received
- No Test results
- No Scans or X-rays

This deficiency is a potential threat to continuity of care once the patient is back home



Travel Companions

- Most patients travel with family or a friend
- These individuals can be exposed to unique health and safety risks
- As well as the same medical risks the medical tourist can experience



HEALTH & SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY PARTICIPANTS



HEALTH LITERACY



What is the difference between health literacy and literacy?

Health literacy is closely related to literacy, but focuses specifically on health information demands.

Health literacy requires the ability to solve problems, evaluate information and know when to take action.



Promoting Health Literacy for patients:

- Whether or not to pursue medical tourism
- What they need to consider when selecting procedures, facilities and destinations; and
- Their responsibilities for seeking necessary follow-up care upon return.



For Health Professionals

Adequate, Appropriate, and Neutral Information

Health & Safety, Potential Risks and Potential Outcomes

- Is the patient suitable to be a Medical Tourist
- Selection of procedure, facility and destination
- Arranging follow-up care on return



CREATING INFORMATIONAL RESOURCES



Informational resources available now:

The following slides are taken from websites, brochures and newsletters published by:

BC Renal Agency & the BC Dental Association

In response to the increasing interest in medical tourism in their specialities



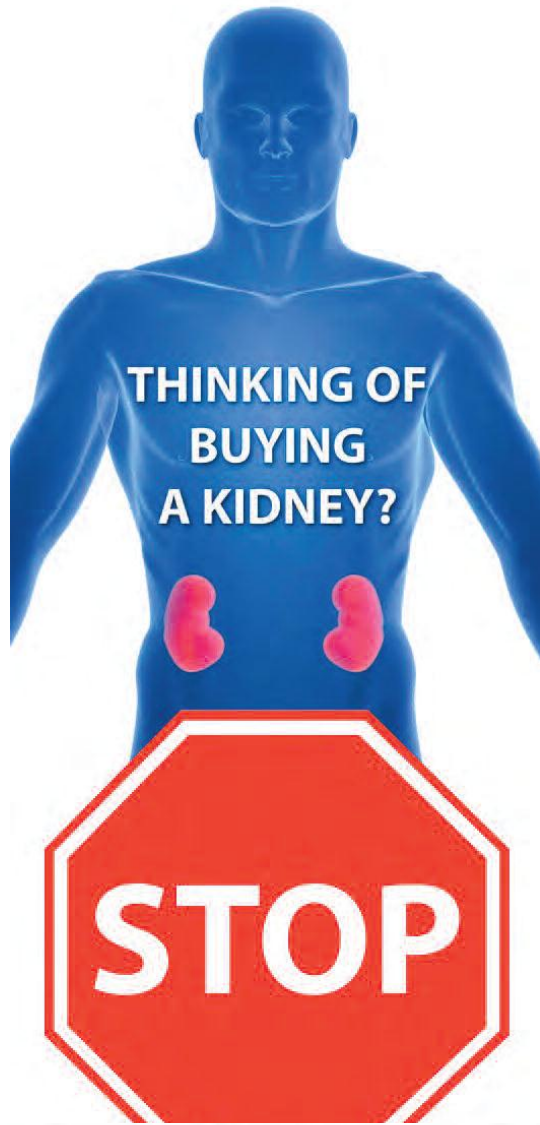
Thinking of buying a kidney?

You may want to think again.

It is illegal in most countries.

Reports on people who purchased kidneys overseas show very high rates of infection and death.

People who sell their kidneys are often coerced and exploited, and receive only a fraction of the dollars spent by the person buying the kidney



The **DECLARATION of ISTANBUL**
on ORGAN TRAFFICKING and TRANSPLANT TOURISM





British
Columbia
Dental
Association

MEDIA RELEASE

October 13, 2011

Dentistry in Mexico May Be Cheap, but Not Always Cheerful

Vancouver, BC – British Columbians planning to winter in Arizona or California may see Mexican dental clinics as a cheaper way to meet their dental care needs. The British Columbia Dental Association (BCDA) provides insights and recommendations to support patients in making informed dental care decisions, and encourages them to weigh the pros and cons before proceeding. [Read More...](#)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PATIENTS

October 13, 2011

British Columbia Dental Association Recommendations for Patients to Consider Before Seeking Dental Treatment Outside of Canada

Clearly understand what dental treatment you need *before* you leave home. Get a cost estimate from your BC dentist and a clear description of the work that is recommended – and why. [Read More...](#)





British Columbia Dental Association



ABOUT BCDA

FIND A DENTIST

DENTAL INSURANCE

DENTAL HEALTH

IN THE NEWS

CE FOR DENTAL PROFESSIONALS

JOB POSTINGS

DENTAL HEALTH

BCDA Public Website > Dental Health

Dental Tourism (Dental Care Outside of Canada)

British Columbia Dental Association Recommendations for Patients to Consider Before Seeking Dental Treatment Outside of Canada

View the November 29, 2011 Global News Hour [segment on Dental Tourism](#).

View the November 30, 2011 Global News Hour [segment on Dental Tourism](#).

View the December 1, 2011 Global News Hour [segment on Dental Tourism](#).

View the December 3, 2011 Global National [segment on Dental Tourism](#).

[Download PDF version of these recommendations](#)
View BCDA's media release on dental tourism in the [media room](#).



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- ⊕ Dental Conditions and Diseases
- Just For Kids
- ⊕ Seniors
- ⊕ Dental Health Education
- Dental Health Topics
 - > Community Water Fluoridation
 - > Dental Care Outside of Canada
- Dental Health Resources



Resources need to be:

- Patient focused
- Available at a wide range of locations
 - Drug stores
 - Doctors offices
 - Website
 - BC MOH
 - Union Offices



Resources cont.

- Offered in a Variety of languages
- Credible information
- Approval of trusted bodies
 - MOH
 - Centre for Disease Control
 - Public Health Agency Canada
 - Health Professional bodies



Resources cont...

- Guidance not Discouragement
- Awareness-raising resources
- Balance between informed decision making and
- Information on associated risks



Encouraging Communication, Patients

- Speak to their regular doctors prior to going
- Ask destination physicians
 - what is the protocol if something unexpected happens?



Encouraging communication Health Professionals

- Education for health care providers in BC about Medical Tourism
 - Associated trends and risks
- Outreach to professional may enable more informed conversations with patients asking for guidance on Medical Tourism



Encouraging Travel Medicine

- Intended Medical Tourist should be encouraged to obtain appropriate vaccines for destination countries
- Those travelling for organ transplants should get viral vaccinations



Adapting public health practices

It's complicated.....

- Does the costs of screening patients treated in foreign hospitals outweigh the potential benefits?
- Is the cost of not screening significant to Public Health?



Enabling consultation

Much remains unknown

How involved in Medical Tourism are British Columbians?

- Engage stakeholders and public
- What are the trends
- Specific instances of Health & Safety Risks



Enabling consultation

- Processes need to be developed systematically and rigorously to create a better response to the needs of the health and health system of British Columbians who go abroad as medical tourists



Undertaking research

Where's your data?

- Health Care administrators and decision makers need data
- Trends need to be identified regarding Medical Tourism's impact on our Health System.
- Professional bodies and health funding organizations need to provide funds to support research to generate the data.



Dec 2011 news item:

Chronic Cerebrospinal Venous Insufficiency - CCSVI

- Registry at UBC MS clinic



REMAINING KNOWLEDGE GAPS & THE IMPORTANCE OF ADDRESSING THEM



Knowledge Gaps

- Medical complications
- (Un)informed decision-making
- Transmission of infectious disease via transplantation
- Transmission of antibiotic-resistant organisms
- Personal safety risks in destinations
- (Dis)continuity of care
- Travel companions



Do you have information to share?

- We'd be keen to hear from those who of you who have observed health and safety risks associated with medical tourism in your own practice
- You can e-mail us to share your experience.
- We're always looking to expand our networks.





QUESTIONS?



Contact Information

- Website
 - www.sfu.ca/medicaltourism
- Email
 - medtour@sfu.ca
- Janet Bristeir
 - bristeir@gmail.com



References:

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 - Literacy Interventions (2006)
- <http://www.bcrenalagency.ca/news/RisksofTransplantTourism/default.htm>
 - Renal Agency



THANK YOU

