



The Need to Launch a Postgraduate Program in Health Tourism in Iran

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Dear Editor-in-Chief

Health tourism is considered as one of the most profitable types of tourism, which means that people travel to other countries aiming at receiving healthcare services(1). In 2020, the global turnover of this industry was about \$ 55 billion, and was predicted to reach over \$ 200 billion by the next seven years. This rate for Iran was only \$ 400-500 million in that year (2020), which was 0.009 of the global amount. In addition, statistics showed that Iran ranked last (46th) among all countries with medical tourism activities in 2020 (2) which is a really questionable rank due to Iran's tourism potentials and various kind of tourist attraction along with its well-known and expert doctors, well-equipped hospitals and modern medical facilities.

Some challenges such as the limited budget of health system, low share of healthcare system in GDP, increase of health system costs, high debt of insurance companies and the increasing pressure on hospitals to control costs and generate revenue, have caused a disruption in the development of this industry in Iran (3). Based on the evidence, one of the most important obstacles in promotion of this promising industry is insuffi-

cient knowledge and attitude of medical sciences university students, as they are the future human resources of the health system (4).

Of course, to improve the familiarity of those interested in this subject, there are limited trainings, from a short training course in some branches of Iran Technical & Vocational Training Organization, to a 2–3-day workshop of a few universities but what is of high importance is that, making progress in this area seems to require an appropriate curriculum planning and developing a systematic university curriculum by the Ministry of Health and Medical Education. Implementing a postgraduate program in health tourism at medical sciences universities, which welcomes graduates of medical sciences fields and other related fields, can provide students with the necessary knowledge about health tourism and global markets, the laws and legal affairs of health tourists, the country's potentials for development of health tourism, entrepreneurship and new methods in areas of economics. In addition, it will prepare students with practical skills such as internships to learn about appropriate interactions with the medical team and health



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tourists, as well as strategic management in health tourism business and solving business problems in the related environment.

Having postgraduate education and the legal need for having this postgraduate degree to have the right to work in this field, will help the industry to be more regulated, better monitored. This will lead to improving foreign patients' satisfaction and consequently further development of this profitable industry and country's economic growth.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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