

## MEDICAL TOURISM AND ITS SUBTYPES

MARIN DIANA\*<sup>1</sup>, PETROMAN CORNELIA<sup>1</sup>, ADAMOV TABITA<sup>1</sup>,  
CIOLAC RAMONA<sup>1</sup>, VĂDUVA LOREDANA<sup>1</sup>, PETROMAN IOAN<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Banat's University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine "King Michael I of Romania" from Timisoara, Faculty of Management and Rural Tourism*

\*Corresponding author's e-mail: diana\_rachiciu@yahoo.com

**Abstract.** *Although there are many phrases that designate medical tourism under one form or another and its sub-types, there is no consensus among scientists and tourism experts on these types and sub-types of tourism, as they are all generally called travel of medical type, which include trips in search of bio-medical treatments, changes in body appearance or of a biological logic. All these sub-types of medical tourism, medical travel, surgical tourism, transplant, cure, spa, and wellness are subscribe to medical tourism, medicine whose main purpose is to maintain, rehabilitate health using the means of diagnosis, treatment and prevention of disorders that occur in the body. We consider that from the point of view of tourism, these sub-types of medical tourism depending on the degree of need for intervention can be considered mandatory, health tourism, transplant, therapeutic or dental and optional tourism such as circumvention tourism, wellness, spa, cosmetic surgery.*

**Key words:** *medical travel, medical tourism, sub-types*

### INTRODUCTION

From its humble forms at the beginning, trips to places with thermal waters, pilgrimages to holy places in the centuries immediately following the consolidation of Christianity, or trips to seaside resorts in the nineteenth century, tourism has come to represent today a mass industry and a profitable element in the economy of some countries. Four major segments of the global tourism market can be identified, with affinities for tourism experiences of the following types:

- ❖ trips for culture;
- ❖ trips for knowledge accumulation;
- ❖ trips for leisure, recreational-fun trips;
- ❖ mandatory or optional medical trips.

Tourism with the four important segments of the tourism market is an important subject when we speak about sociology of leisure and is part of the areas adjacent to cultural geography and interesting post-colonial studies, the theme of mobility, identity, changing realities and medical treatments is based on contrasts between present and past, stereotypes, fashion. The tourism industry is seen as a complex phenomenon whose global impact can be devastating if are not developed progressive strategies to prepare the ground for international regional and local economic development. UNESCO has reconsidered the relationship between tourism and cultural diversity, between tourism and intercultural dialogue, between tourism and development, between tourism and health preservation in the context of millions of tourists visiting different destinations every year, but among them must be also:

- the fight against poverty;
- the fight to maintain health and prevent disease;
- protection of the environment and prevention of desertification of some areas;
- mutual respect of cultures.

Because it is considered that the number of existing activities generates as many forms of tourism or subtypes of tourism and in medical tourism or medical travel there are a number of subtypes but all have a collective term „medical migration” which includes „travel in search of a medical treatment, a change in the body or a biological logic”[16]. All types and sub-types of medical tourism are limited to medicine, whose main purpose is

to preserve, treat, and rehabilitate health with the help of specific means of treatment. We believe that these types and sub-types of medical tourism, from the point of view of tourist activity, can be classified, depending on the degree of need for intervention, in mandatory and optional. According to language dictionaries, medical tourism is another term for international medical travel [13] and for health tourism [20]. Some authors consider, however, that there are differences between the two types of tourism, and define medical tourism as „travel across international borders, with the intention of receiving some form of medical treatment”[11] or as „biomedical procedures combined with travel and tourism”[10] and health tourism as “travel outside the place of residence for the purpose of improving or restoring a person’s health through various forms of medical services”[10] or as “organized travel outside the local environment for maintenance, improvement or restoration the good mental and physical condition of a person” [11,18].

Medical tourism is defined as „the act of traveling to another country to seek specialist medical care or economic, well-being and recovery of acceptable quality through a support system” [9] as „an international movement in search of healthcare, which emphasizes individual action, choice and possibilities” [4], as “a journey in search of elective or compulsory medical services” [18], as “the practice of traveling to another country in order to obtain medical assistance” [6], as “providing profitable private healthcare in collaboration with the tourism industry for patients in need of surgical and other specialized treatment” [1].

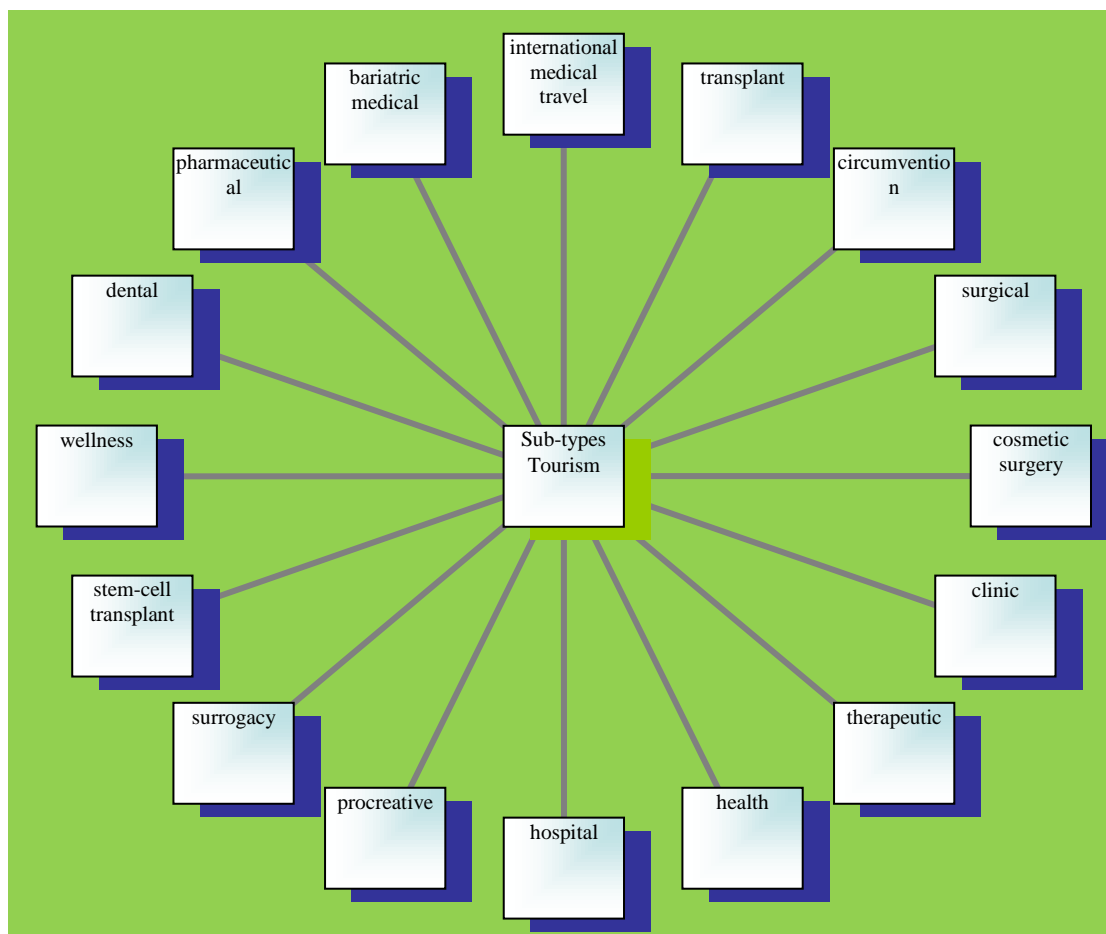
### **MATERIAL AND METHOD**

In this scientific approach, based on the consultation of the tourist special literature, we have tried based on the activities carried out within the medical trip or medical tourism to analyze its sub-types according to the degree of optional or mandatory intervention based on some phrases that designate under a form or another this form of health tourism, because we see the importance and travel agencies that promote medical tourism offer packages that include the medical procedure, plane tickets, booking a hotel room and tourist attractions complementary to medical treatment.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The literature uses a range of notions to designate medical tourism, medical travel with its subtypes:

- international medical travel or medical tourism;
- transplant tourism;
- circumvention tourism;
- surgical tourism;
- cosmetic surgery tourism;
- clinic tourism;
- therapeutic tourism
- health tourism;
- hospital tourism;
- procreative tourism;
- surrogacy tourism;
- stem-cell transplant tourism;
- wellness tourism;
- dental tourism;
- pharmaceutical tourism;
- bariatric medical tourism;
- cross border tourism.



**Figure 1. Sub-types of medical tourism**

Taking into account the necessity degree of practicing these sub-types of medical tourism, we find that some of these forms are:

- mandatory: health tourism, transplant, dental, therapeutic;
- optional: cosmetic surgery, circumvention, spa and wellness tourism.

From the point of view of tourism, conservation tourism, health care or so-called health tourism can include medical tourism if it is analyzed under the conditions provided by prevention methodologies, as a manifestation of health tourism. The reasons for practicing medical tourism are multiple:

- ensuring privacy and confidentiality [7];
- good reputation of medical institutions [2];
- quality and safety of the services offered;
- high costs of healthcare in industrialized countries;
- advanced standards of care in many countries of the world;
- high degree of promotion through travel agencies [14].

It turns out that there are inconveniences related to the practice of medical tourism related to benefits, ethics and risks [6,12], mobility of patients, professionals and products used [8], for these reasons medical tourism in terms of legal status, method of payment and destination of treatment can be classified into:

- legal medical treatment tourism in both countries;
- medical tourism of illegal treatments in the patient's country but legal at the destination;
- tourism of illegal treatments in both countries.

This form of medical tourism has its specificity or depending on the treatment methods used, the geographical area and the price of the intervention. Depending on the obligatory nature of the intervention, we distinguish within the medical tourism the following sub-types of obligatory medical tourism:

- the sub-type of medical health tourism, involves a trip for medical treatment and is addressed to people seeking recreation, who want to delay aging, who want a short break, those who are concerned about disease prevention. Within this subtype we distinguish medical tourism:

- a. health;
- b. of wellness.

- sub-type of transplant medical tourism, implies the existence of a donor of organs, a container and a medical intervention. It seems that this form of tourism presents multiple questions from a legal, ethical and safety point of view.

- the sub-type of dental medical tourism, involves the journey for treatment, whitening, reconstruction to which is added the tourist dimension;

- the sub-type of therapeutic medical tourism, involves treatments to restore the function of a body physiotherapy, physical exercise, rehabilitation using various remedies. A special category is:

- a. horticultural therapy [15];
- b. animal-assisted therapy [19];
- c) melotherapy.

Optional intervention medical tourism includes the following sub-types:

➤ the sub-type of medical tourism of cosmetic surgery, performed to improve the appearance of a part of the human body in contrast to the plastic surgery which consists in the correction or reconstruction of defective segments. The procedures are different: blepharoplasty, facelift, liposuction, mastopexy and are followed by visiting the destinations where the surgeries take place;

➤ the sub-type of medical circumvention tourism, involves the trip to another destination where abortion tourism is not prohibited, fertility tourism [3] these sub-types being reserved only for women;

➤ the sub-type of spa medical tourism, has the advantage of practicing throughout the year, specialists in the field talk about this subtype and the sub-type of wellness. We distinguish within this sub-type:

- a. destination spa - for health care;
- b. medical spa - medical and wellness care;
- c. mineral springs spa - treatments with natural mineral or thermal water;
- d. spa resort - spa in a complex/hotel that offers professionally managed spa services, fitness and wellness components, menu options for the spa kitchen.

➤ the sub-type of medical wellness tourism, may include the medical health sub-type of tourism and the medical tourism of wellness sub-type, the spa subtype falling into both subtypes. When it comes to a trip that includes activities related to health, most often are used names such as medical travel, health tourism, spa tourism, wellness tourism or medical tourism [17] instead other researchers [5] talk about wellness and spa tourism. We believe that the medical tourism of wellness sub-type emphasizes the physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of the individual and does not include medical treatment but includes the medical spa tourism sub-type. Within the wellness medical tourism sub-type, a multitude of procedures are practiced: aromatherapy, paraffin bath, sand bath, climatotherapy, pelotherapy, phytotherapy, heliotherapy, massage, stone massage, sauna, color therapy, therapy through sound, dance, diet, reading, cosmetic treatments and life in the middle of nature.

## CONCLUSIONS

Medical tourism or travel for medical purposes, involves moving to another country to seek specialized medical care or economic care, good condition and recovery of acceptable quality through a support system, knows depending on the medical activities undertaken several sub-types medical tourism.

Taking into account the necessity degree of practicing these sub-types of medical tourism, some are mandatory, health tourism, transplant, dental, therapeutic and others optional, cosmetic surgery tourism, spa and wellness tourism.

Preservation tourism, health care or so-called health tourism can include medical tourism if it is analyzed under the conditions provided by prevention methodologies, as a manifestation of health tourism but the reasons for practicing medical tourism are multiple, ensuring confidentiality, good reputation of institutions, quality, safety and standards of services, the high degree of promotion through travel agencies that offer complete medical and leisure packages. The practice of medical tourism also encounters inconveniences related to benefits, ethics, risks or the legality of some interventions, payment method and destinations.

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