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Current trend and strategy of medical tourism in South Korea

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Background: The Korean Government decided to develop medical tourism industry in 2009. The ultimate goal of pursuing globalization of healthcare was the development of healthcare industry promising more job opportunities. Since then, Korean government invested a lot of money to develop medical tourism industry.

Objective: This presentation deal with the following issues: 1) Current trend of medical tourism in South Korea, 2) Policy issues, 3) Strategy of government to develop medical tourism industry

Methods: This study uses the government data on foreign patients. The Korean hospitals/clinics are required to report the treatment cases of foreign patients to the government organization (KHIDI) by law.

Discussion: The number of medical tourists increased from

60,201 in 2009 to 364,189 in 2016(KHIDI, 2017). The average annual growth rate from 2009 to 2016 was nearly 30%. The hospital earnings from foreign patients was just \$50 million in 2009, but rose to \$800 million in 2016, nearly 16 times over a 7-year period. The strategy of Korean government is to create the value for the medical tourists in the following areas: 1) transparency(e.g., price list, doctor list, tax refund), 2) accountability(e.g., mandatory liability insurance, medical tourist insurance, development of risk and complaint management protocol), 3) professionalism(e.g., national certificate of medical tourism coordinator, development of training programs), 4) safety(e.g., hospital/clinic accreditation), 5) patient advocacy(e.g., setting the upper limit of agency commission) and 6) convenience(e.g., medical visa, MT help desk).

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