Dear reader,

With stock markets jumping up and down at random and governments bailing out almost regularly, one might wonder if these are signs of another global crisis ahead. One thing that this situation clearly shows is that politicians and economists alike have become clueless about how to tackle the many problems that their economies are faced with.

What is often missing in this discussion is that these problems are not merely of economical but, up and foremost, financial nature. Especially in the United States, the old politics of “hurry now, pay later” seems to have finally caught up with budgetary reality. Things are still looking better in Europe but the struggles of the South will pose a serious obstacle for the survival of the Union in the years to come.

The only way to straighten out the troubles of the West and the model of capitalism in the long run is for governments to finally sort out their messy finances. Unfortunately, dental professionals could be one of the many losers as this could mean increased taxations and less governmental spending on things like health care.

Yours sincerely,
Daniel Zimmermann
Group Editor
Dental Tribune International

Health tourism issues in India

Vivek Shukla
India

The latest report by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India has made some good points regarding the prospects of health tourism in India. While the flow of foreign patients has indeed increased over recent years, some issues remain, such as distance that could act as a deterrent and have to be addressed in order to maintain the growth curve.

For example, India seldom gets patients from the EU, as regulations there have made it easier for people to travel within their own region. People in the US prefer to go to Mexico and other nearby countries rather than take a 16-hour flight to India, especially when in a poor medical condition.

Clinical quality in private hospitals, though largely good, is mostly self-regulated and so there is no regulation in clinical outcomes other than some laws on medical negligence. Here, compensation of the aggrieved party is not very high compared with many other countries. There are no specific laws that safeguard the interests of international patients, and legal processes are long and may require multiple visits.

Unless the government actively participates in promoting India as a destination, success will be elusive. Visa requirements, for example, are currently not very easy for an international traveller to fly to New Delhi and then take a connecting flight or a train to Jaipur. This could be a major hurdle for the growth of international health tourism in these places.

Vivek Shukla is CEO of Vivek Shukla & Associates, a health care business consulting firm based in New Delhi. He can be contacted at vivek@viveshukla.com.

Contact Info

Dental Tribune welcomes comments, suggestions and complaints at feedback@dental-tribune.com

To the Editor

Re: “European Commission reviews environmental aspects of mercury in dental fillings” (Dental Tribune Asia Pacific Vol. 9, No. 6, page 1)

The thing we must remember when thinking about why we should ban mercury in dentistry is the eternal environmental impact once it is released. Unfortunately, so much of the dental mercury is being illegally diverted to small-scale gold miners throughout the developing countries and those places will be lost forever owing to the massive contamination. After watching and listening to Professor Minamata disease (the first internationally recognised mercury-contaminated site in Minamata, Japan), I say shame on us for allowing mercury to be used again in any application. How much longer do we have to wait before changing things? The time is now! I am hoping that some of my colleagues who have been fighting this fight for 50 years or more will see the end in their lifetime.

Anta Thau, 22 Jun. 2011


Dental Tribune International

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