



# The Influence of Health Tourists' Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder on Their Satisfaction and Intention to Revisit

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### Dear Editor

We are writing to highlight a critical yet overlooked issue in health tourism research: the impact of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) on health tourists' satisfaction during their healthcare journeys and their intention to return.

Despite existing studies addressing mental health challenges among tourists, the specific influence of OCD remains underexplored, leaving a significant gap in understanding its implications within the unique context of health tourism. OCD is an anxiety condition distinguished by persistent, intrusive thoughts and the compulsion to engage in repetitive actions or rituals to relieve anxiety (1, 2). Studies have indicated that OCD can significantly impact an individual's life, including their satisfaction with various aspects of life, such as trips (3). Evidence showed that traveling can worsen OCD symptoms by disrupting routines and exposing individuals to new environments. Common triggers include fears of contamination, safety concerns, and intrusive thoughts about potential mishaps.

Additionally, the anxiety related to trip planning may intensify obsessions and compulsions, such as excessive checking of travel arrangements or performing rituals to alleviate perceived risks (4).

When it comes to health tourism, it should be given more importance since satisfying someone with OCD who has another health issue to follow up is much more challenging and needs special consideration and preparation. International patients with OCD may experience extra anxiety and precautions, even in a very typical situation. They might encounter difficulties feeling satisfied with their medical trip due to diagnostic delays and mismanagement, treatment accessibility and efficacy, comorbidities and cultural differences, and procedural and safety concerns (5). This is of utmost importance as it can sometimes disrupt the service delivery process for these individuals by health tourism professionals. This anxiety can persist beyond the duration of the medical trip, affecting their overall satisfaction and desire to return for future treatments.

Healthcare providers and organizations related to the health tourism industry must be aware of

the potential impact of OCD on health tourists' satisfaction. By understanding the unique needs and challenges faced by individuals with OCD, specific support and suitable assistance can be offered to ensure a favorable experience. We encourage healthcare professionals and policymakers in the health tourism industry to consider the following recommendations:

#### 1- **Enhancement of Education and Training Programs**

Involved professionals in the health tourism industry should receive comprehensive training on OCD to enhance patient satisfaction and care. Also, establishing specialized degrees that include mental health modules can equip professionals with the necessary knowledge and skills (6), fostering empathy and supportive interactions and ultimately improving health tourists' experiences.

#### 2- **Pre-travel Assessment of Mental Health Status**

Healthcare professionals should implement standardized mental health assessments for health tourists before travel. This encourages disclosure, allowing for tailored treatment plans and support systems, particularly for those with OCD. Establishing this protocol can reduce anxiety and enhance treatment outcomes by addressing unique needs.

#### 3- **Creation of Supportive Environments**

Healthcare facilities in health tourism should foster supportive environments for individuals with OCD by promoting understanding, minimizing stressors, and providing access to mental health resources. Such efforts enhance psychological well-being, improve patient satisfaction, and encourage revisitation, benefiting both patients and providers.

#### 4- **Adoption of OCD-Inclusive Practices**

Implementing OCD-inclusive practices within health tourism settings can significantly boost competitiveness among destinations. Facilities that actively accommodate the unique needs of patients with mental issues such as OCD can differentiate themselves within a competitive market.

#### 5- **Integration of Management and Information Systems**

Emphasizing the role of management and information systems is crucial for addressing the complex needs of health tourists with OCD. Electronic Health Records (EHRs) should be

designed to flag specific needs related to OCD, ensuring that healthcare providers can access relevant patient information promptly. Similarly, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems should incorporate modules for tracking mental health preferences and history, allowing for personalized care and communication that addresses the individual requirements of each patient.

#### 6- **Implementation of Recommendations Through Collaborative Efforts**

Healthcare professionals and policymakers must collaborate to implement these recommendations effectively. Ongoing dialogue among stakeholders can identify challenges and share best practices. By forming partnerships between health organizations, mental health specialists, and policymakers, a multi-faceted approach can be established, ensuring that the mental health of tourists is prioritized in health tourism strategies.

### **Conclusion**

This approach may help ensure that health tourists with OCD receive the essential assistance they need during their medical travels. This will contribute to a more inclusive and satisfactory experience for these strict tourists, influencing their tendency to revisit. Additionally, their favorable experience has a significant influence on their word-of-mouth communication, leading to the promotion of health tourism marketing in the destination country.

### **Author's Contribution**

All authors have contributed equally to writing and revising the draft.

### **Ethical Approval**

This study did not require an ethics committee approval since it was not done on human or animal trials.

### **Conflict of Interest**

There are no conflicts of interest.

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