



THE AMERICAS: UNITED STATES

What is making news in your country when it comes to spa and wellness?

From my medical tourism and international healthcare perspective I see a couple of truly significant trends:

- 1) US medical facilities have over the past 10 years begun to emerge from a “fix-it” shop mentality to one more focused on prevention of illness and alternate strategies of maintaining health. Wellness, CAD and integrative medicine centers have now been embraced by leading medical centers, including Cleveland Clinic’s Wellness Insititute, Duke Medical’s Center for Integrative Medicine, wellness programs at Stanford, Mayo, Johns Hopkins and many more.
- 2) Healthcare reform (Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare) offers wellness incentives for employer and insurers, which spell opportunities for wellness and spa stakeholders. For example, Massage Envy’s Corporate Wellness program engages employers and employees; future programs will no doubt benefit from ACA wellness initiatives.

What is happening in your country when it comes to wellness tourism and/or medical tourism?

Regarding medical tourism, the outbound US market is growing at around 25% with some 900,000 Americans leaving the country for a variety of money-saving treatments in more than 30 medical travel destinations, including Mexico, Costa Rica, Belgium, Thailand, Malaysia and S. Korea to name a few. The number of patients visiting the US remains stable at around 800,000 inbound. Domestic medical tourism is on the rise, with large medical centers like Cleveland Clinic and Johns Hopkins working with big corporations like Loews and Pepsico to offer incentives for patients willing to travel for some of the best care the nation has to offer.

Please give us one sentence to describe the latest developments in your country for each of these spa categories:

What is happening with hotel spas? The rise of “healthy hotels” a la IHG/EVEN, Westin and Trump are broadening the spa and wellness offering to health-conscious travelers.

Looking back at the past four decades of spa and wellness, what would you consider “a defining moment?”

Don’t know. Looking forward, I believe we’ll see a host of “defining moments” around an increasingly heightened perception of the significant role of spas and other wellness venues in helping to retrieve and maintain healthy populations. Most developed and emerging nations are grappling with rising healthcare costs, coupled with increasingly unhealthy populations, mostly due to poor lifestyles leading to expensive diseases, and huge economic burdens. We will increasingly see wellness-related businesses becoming part of a more serious dialog around wellness; savvy spa stakeholders would be prudent to position their offerings accordingly.

SUBMITTED BY:

Josef Woodman
CEO
Patients Beyond Borders