



industry and create more business for all. ht8 is essentially an insurance policy for destinations. Should demand in one segment decline (even temporarily), the other seven will sustain the destination.

### CALCULATING VALUE

While there's no question that the industry can generate sizeable turnover for health-related service providers and supporting industries (from finance and hospitality to insurance and transport), exactly how much is debatable.

Constantinides argues that without proper measurement tools, none of the attempts to value the industry (figures run into unsubstantiated billions of dollars) are reliable. This is because no-one is really counting – and cannot count – until the proposed Health Tourism Satellite Account (HTSA) devised by healthCare cybernetics is adopted as the standard “accounting system”. Importantly, the HTSA is segment-specific, meaning it facilitates measurement in each of the ht8 segments, including medical tourism.

“I’m particularly keen to see emerging health tourism destinations get off to a good start (with real numbers),” says Constantinides. “In Africa, South Africa can be an early adopter and serve as an exemplar. No doubt the proposed founding of the South African Health Tourism Council will be of great help.”

At the Pan-African Health Tourism Congress being held in uMhlathuze, KwaZulu-Natal in June, delegates will look at investment in and development and promotion of the sector in Africa, including education and employment opportunities.

According to Mduduzi Mhlongo, Mayor of uMhlathuze, the municipality has seen exponential growth in healthcare institution developments recently, which are expected to contribute substantially to future GDP for the region. He hopes that sectors such as the pharmaceutical industry will be encouraged to invest further in drug-development infrastructure that will service a chain of hospitals, creating jobs for unemployed youth and helping to bridge the skills gap.

### WHY CHOOSE AFRICA?

Given Africa’s pioneering role in the medical field, highly-skilled doctors, exceptional medical care, state-of-the-art facilities and wide-ranging appeal as a travel destination, the continent’s health tourism infrastructure is set to contribute significantly to the global framework. South Africa, Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco and Mauritius are top choices, with Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique,

Zimbabwe, Namibia and Botswana competing comfortably with some of the world’s top tourism destinations.

Based in Bryanston, Johannesburg, Surgeon & Safari has spearheaded independent medical tourism in South Africa since 1999. Founder and owner Lorraine Melvill describes their service as “providing foreigners with the opportunity to make use of the world’s best cosmetic surgeons and medical facilities and the ability to recover in luxury, followed by a five-star safari to rejuvenate them before they return home”. She was a founding member of the Medical Tourism Association of South Africa in 2006.

Medical tourist Dawn Byrne says she left Africa “a new woman – body and soul”, while Kim van Aswegen says signing up for liposuction, a mini tummy tuck and a breast lift was “the experience of a lifetime”. Not only were the procedures much cheaper than they are in the USA, but she returned home feeling pampered, rejuvenated and empowered.



respondents was 69,3% in high season, compared with the average 43,1% in low season, revealing that in-season prices are no deterrent.

Figures were drawn from 14 respondents, namely the multi-speciality clinics Fortis Clinique Darné, Apollo Bramwell Hospital (ABH), Clinique du Nord, La Nouvelle Clinique Ferriere, Chisty Shifa Clinic, Clinique Mauricienne and La Nouvelle Clinique du Bon Pasteur, as well as speciality clinics Harley Street Fertility Centre, Centre Esthétique Océan Indien, Clinic Candos (ENT), Dr Agarwal’s Eye Hospital, Dentcare Ltd, Les Mariannes Wellness and the Green Cross Medical Laboratory.

### COSMETIC SURGERY IS ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS FOREIGNERS TRAVEL TO MAURITIUS.

Cosmetic surgery is one of the main reasons foreigners travel to Mauritius. The annual private healthcare providers’ survey for 2016, released by the Board of Investment – Mauritius in April, shows that 24% of specified treatments were for cosmetic and plastic surgery (including hair implants), with medical treatment such as dialysis at 46%.

The survey estimates the number of foreign medical tourists in 2016 to have been around 18 222, up from 11 636 in 2012, of whom 36% were from France, and 39% from other (unspecified) countries. Among popular medical tourism destinations, Madagascar and the Seychelles generated the next highest numbers of patients at 7% and 4%. Interestingly, the average occupancy among



**Clockwise, from top right:** The Apollo Bramwell Hospital. • State-of-the-art scanning facilities. • The hospital’s lobby. • A private room for paediatric patients.

## Medical tourism HEALTH CHECK

*South Africa and Mauritius are attractive options for those seeking exceptional medical care and recuperation benefits in one destination. By Debbie Hathway*

With South Africa well established in the field of medical tourism and Mauritius gearing up to position itself as a key player in what stakeholders are calling medical value travel, Constantine Constantinides of the UK-based health tourism “think and do tank”, healthCare cybernetics, sheds light on the sector. “Very simply, health tourism is defined as health-related services involving some travel. Every tourist is potentially a health tourist,” he says.

Medical tourism – travel for surgical procedures and medical treatments abroad – is one of eight health tourism segments,

which must be considered separately, largely for economic reasons. Constantinides says it dawned on him early on that it makes no sense for destinations to bet exclusively on just one segment of health tourism. And he’s not alone in this belief.

In February 2017, the Global Healthcare Travel Council unanimously voted in favour of the eight-segment approach to health tourism in what has become known as the Amman Declaration. Health tourism 8 (ht8) encompasses medical, dental, spa, wellness, culinary, sports, accessible and assisted residential categories, designed to expand the



**Clockwise, from left:** The Apollo Bramwell Hospital's suites have lounges for family. The Presidential Suite. Wards feel like hotel rooms.

in Zimbabwe so that citizens with relevant medical insurance could use that benefit for surgical procedures. He has since initiated discussions with South African Airways, travel and tour agents, hospitality providers, hospitals and clinics to collaborate in the design of appropriate packages for families, groups and couples accompanying patients. "It's a holistic approach. Post-surgical convalescence is very important – in an environment of this nature, it becomes that much more appealing for the price point." Menon Ramasawmy, SAA Country

## MEDICAL VALUE TRAVEL

Fortis Clinique Darne and ABH are the top revenue generators in this group. ABH will be renamed in the near future, following its takeover last year by the Medical and Surgical Centre Ltd, a CIEL Healthcare Ltd subsidiary. The CIEL Group and its partner, Fortis Healthcare, one of the largest and fastest-growing private healthcare groups in India, are managing the hospital. CIEL MD Alex Alexander says their intention is to increase awareness of centres of excellence in certain specialities in Mauritius. "We're doing a lot more than plastics, dentistry and hair grafting. We can do cardiac and spinal surgeries and high-end orthopaedic and urological procedures as well – and the outcomes are really successful. People need to know that.

"At CIEL, we don't want to be doing bread-and-butter work (that patients can have done at home). That's not medical value travel (MVT) – then you're fleecing the patient. For me, MVT has to be about quality



"Admittedly, one cannot claim generally that African countries can compete with established medical tourism destinations on other continents for the 'international patient', which is why most African destinations need to first focus on the segments other than medical and dental," he says. Constantinides also sees great prospects for assisted residential tourism (for ageing travellers), with some of the motivating factors being climate and cost.



Manager: Mauritius and Indian Ocean Islands, says: "People are travelling from Kenya on the east coast, as well as Zimbabwe and Zambia to India for treatment, but Mauritius is closer for them if they can get direct connections on flights. If the players here price the product packages correctly, we can get a share of that market."

The airline connects the island to Africa daily, with 11 flights a week from South Africa to Mauritius on SAA or code-sharing with Air Mauritius. "For us this makes sense, giving flexibility to the customer who can choose to fly in the afternoon or the morning. And Voyager members can still earn air miles when they book an SAA flight number," says Ramasawmy.

"We also have the Airbus 330 on the route three times a week and this can cater for customers who might need a stretcher for medical reasons."

SAA also code-shares with Air Seychelles and Airlink operates from Madagascar and Réunion Island. "Discounted flights won't be the sole incentive to attract people to Mauritius. In addition to getting the hospitality stakeholders on board, work has to be done with medical and insurance companies to list Mauritius as an accredited destination for surgery so that authorised expenses can be refunded. It has to be an industry effort," says Ramasawmy. 🇷🇺

## HEALTH TOURISM IS ALSO ABOUT HEALTH-RELATED SUPPORT – AS OPPOSED TO ONLY TREATMENT AND MAINTENANCE OR RESTORATION OF HEALTH.

medicine and you have to get good value for the treatment as well."

Health tourism is also about health-related support – as opposed to only treatment and maintenance or restoration of health. This caters for tourists who need dialysis, for example. Even if we only focus on medical tourism, people within the African continent will often choose treatment in another African country because it's better, cheaper, close and offers cultural affinity. Constantinides calls this intra-African medical tourism.

## EASE OF ACCESS

One of the biggest advantages for members of the Southern African Development Community is that they don't need a visa to enter Mauritius. In addition, when it comes to travel, it's a same-day affair to access world-class service at relatively affordable prices, says Dr S Suketu Naik of Zimbabwean-based Lemex Products, now also operating on the island. "This is very important for medical tourism."

Two years ago, Naik was instrumental in achieving medical aid accreditation for ABH