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Bumrungrad Hospital Attracts Chinese Patients For Its High-Quality Care and Facilities

China Travel Trends recently spoke with Kenneth Mays, Marketing Director at Bangkok's Bumrungrad International Hospital. Bumrungrad, which has long been at the forefront of Thailand's medical tourism and wellness industry, is attracting a growing number of Chinese patients. China Travel Trends spoke with Mr. Mays to understand the reasons for this growth in popularity.

CTT: About how many Chinese patients visited Bumrungrad last year?

Mays: Last year we had about 7500 patients who list their home as China. Some of those, of course, could be expatriates who are living in China but are not Chinese.

CTT: Do you see any trends in numbers of patients from China?

Mays: It's up about 25% in the past year, so we've had some significant growth.

CTT: What services are Chinese patients most interested in?

Mays: They're most interested in ob-gyn, pediatrics, check-ups and GI. And dental is in the top five.

CTT: I've heard that fertility services are popular among Chinese patients. Is this true?

Mays: Yes. We have a very good IVF team here. And we can do genetic testing of an embryo (EGD). That's

one of our typical IVF services. However, in keeping with Thailand's medical guidelines, the hospital does not offer gender selection.

CTT: Where do outpatients and their families stay when receiving care at Bumrungrad?

Mays: There are all varieties of hotels in our immediate area where patients and families can stay.

CTT: Does Bumrungrad have an office in mainland China?

Mays: We have a referral office in Hong Kong. We are looking for a capable referral office or partner in mainland China.

CTT: How would you describe the typical Chinese patient who visits Bumrungrad? Or, perhaps I should say, why do Chinese patients choose Bumrungrad?

Mays: Of course, some of our guests don't plan to come here. They come because of some medical condition that arises while in Thailand, like an illness. But, for those who come to Thailand to visit Bumrungrad, you'll find wealthy Chinese who are looking for a VIP experience and don't want to wait in queues at hospitals in China. Keep in mind that China has a big national medical system that doesn't cost much. But there's also a growing private medical system, and, of course I'm biased, but I'd say we offer a much better value proposition than they do.

CTT: What particular services do you have to cater to Chinese patients?

Mays: Of course, we have both Mandarin and Cantonese interpreters. And, we have a lot of services that international patients require, international food, cultural amenities, things like that. And, there's a lot of coordination between our hospital and the patients' home hospitals and doctors.

CTT: In closing, what are the challenges that Thailand faces in attracting more Chinese patients to its international hospitals and clinics? Or, should I say, how can Thailand market itself more effectively as a good destination for medical and wellness tourism to Chinese patients?

Mays: The challenge with China is that there is not as clear as a value proposition as there is in some of the developing countries in the area, where there is a perceived shortage of good doctors, particularly specialists, so there is a strong incentive to come to Thailand, where there are plenty of internationally trained specialists. China has a lot of doctors, so there's not a shortage of doctors per se. The bigger challenge is that China is becoming very aware of Thailand as a fun tourist destination. So, in some ways, their image of Thailand as a recreational destination fights their image of Thailand as a place where you go for quality medical services. So, we really must let them know that we have patients from all over the world who come here because of our medical excellence. It's not just a fun place to relax, it's a serious medical destination.

By Chris Rowthorn, China Travel Trends South East Correspondent

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