



Healthy Vacations

Symmetria medical center has recently reached an agreement with TUI Hellas to provide comprehensive health-tourism packages.

Dr Nikolaos Metaxotos, MD, PhD, EBOPRAS, President and CEO of Symmetria medical center, presents to **Katerina Linou**, the advantages of this association prior to the official announcement that will take place at a special event on 12 March 2007 at the King George Palace Hotel

PHOTO BY C. DRAZOS

What exactly constitutes the recent agreement between Symmetria and TUI?

The aim of this cooperation is to be able to propose to potential patients a full A-to-Z service, taking them from their homeland, bringing them to Greece, offering them full accommodation and hospitality services and an enjoyable stay, together with the medical treatment of their choice, in a safe, secure, luxurious environment at truly competitive prices. TUI Hellas, responsible for the travel services, is a recognized tourism organization with excellent reputation, and we are very happy to be able to work with them towards developing health tourism, which we feel has great potential for Greece and its tourism industry.

What kind of medical services does Symmetria offer to patients from outside Greece?

We have put together a comprehensive package that comprises surgical and non-surgical services, mainly related to cosmetic and aesthetic medicine. Along with that, we offer first class accommodation and hospitality services in selected hotels only. We target people who are healthy but who wish to undergo a procedure to improve the way they look and feel. We have found that such people are more open to traveling, embracing new experiences and combining their aesthetic treatment with a holiday package that will give them time-off from their daily life and will allow them to enjoy their treatment even more.

What is the business model that you have created to develop this Health Tourism aspect of your business?

We have presented our function and services to other clinics and medical centres in Europe, thus creating a network of partnerships that caters for patient referral and, certainly more importantly, for pre-operative and postoperative medical care in the patient's country of residence. We are also in the process of seeking alliances with medical organisations either through EOMMEX or the European Union partnership programs. And we are now working towards developing this partnership with TUI Hellas, in order to promote our full services to their targeted clientele.

What advantages do you offer to patients who choose medical procedures at Symmetria?

We propose a superior medical team, consisting of specialized surgeons that are European Board or American Board qualified and have significant experience both in Greece and abroad. We offer premium hospital facilities, at lower fees when compared to other Western European ones. We combine all that with first class accommodation and treatment, along with a package of hospitality and sightseeing that promotes Greek culture, the uniqueness of

our country's landscape and the temperament of its people. The total price of the package is really competitive, compared to the amount of money a patient would have to pay in Western Europe for the treatment alone.

What makes Greece a competitive health tourism destination?

Greek doctors are well qualified and bring significant experience from international health systems. Hospitals are well equipped for people wishing to undergo a range of surgical procedures. However, we do discourage heavy procedures for people who will be travelling. But our true advantage lies in the unique atmosphere of our country: our culture, our people, the weather conditions, and the tourism infrastructure that has so greatly improved since the Olympic Games of 2004. All these parameters are added value for people who do not suffer from serious health problems and are able to combine a simple medical procedure with a pleasant holiday.

What cooperation can be established between Greek medical professionals and medical professionals from outside Greece to increase medical and health tourism in Greece?

The Symmetria model looks for partnerships with international medical clinics or institutions that wish to offer their patients additional services. The clinic abroad usually takes care of the first screening and pre-op tests, and only pre-qualified patients arrive in Athens. This means that we only treat people who are well and fit to undergo an operation and also to enjoy what our country has to offer. This is a win-win situation for both parties, and the more expanded the network is the more profitable it can be. I do believe that offering the extra advantage of a luxurious treatment in a wonderful environment, such as the one we guarantee in Athens, is indeed a competitive advantage for our international partners.

Are there further foreign investment opportunities in this area that could enhance Greece's ability to offer a variety of medical and health services?

I believe so. International practices are turning more and more towards thematic tourism and specialised tourism services, and this is well understood in countries like Dubai, for example, which to me is an excellent example of grasping the benefits of tourism. Our country has, without a doubt, a lot to offer in this field. We welcome international investment in a successful model that has lots of possibilities to grow and expand if solid partnerships can be created. ✨

Info

For more information: www.healthtourism.gr
www.symmetria.gr, www.tuicorp.gr