

# REGIONAL VITALITY

As the medical tourism industry develops across the Middle East into an emerging powerhouse, **Panayiotis Markides** spoke to leading experts to investigate how medical tourism stakeholders can provide the ultimate service for patients

According to a recent *Patients Beyond Borders* estimate, the medical tourism industry is worth between \$24 billion and \$40 billion, as of 2013. With this in mind, it comes as no surprise that many countries are eager to increase their medical offerings to capitalise on this lucrative market. Key medical figures from the region informed *TTG* of their insights on responsibility, growth and the demands of Middle Eastern patients.



**Owner, Harmonia Surgical Tourism Istanbul, Didem Ozyigit reveals the responsibilities and expertise offered by medical facilitators**

Medical tourism is a very special field of business that you need to understand well, along with the ethics of medicine to put the patient's safety as the top priority. It does not mean the type of tourism where we talk about sea or culture, but it means going to another city or country for a medical need. For many procedures, you cannot combine tourism with a treatment plan.

Many agents try to sell touristic activities together with medical treatment plans and clients cannot understand if this is applicable or not. I advise that medical tourists compare the prices with the offered services and always try to concentrate on how professional the approach is of a medical travel agent/facilitator.

The difference of Harmonia comes from it having a medical director as the co-founder who is a plastic surgeon and has a scientific approach as well as high ethical standards. He is also objective when listening to his patients and making the right choices to find the perfect match in their fields of medicine.



**CEO, Dubai Health Care City (DHCC), Marwan Abedin informs *TTG* on how medical tourism is growing exponentially in Dubai**

An estimated 15 per cent of our current patients are medical tourists. In 2013, the medical facilities and clinics at DHCC grew by 12 per cent in terms of services and occupied space. Since 2010, our patients have increased from approximately 400,000 to one million in 2013.

To quote but one example, one of our clinical partners specialising in cosmetic surgery reported a 71.6 per cent increase in patients from the GCC and MENA region in 2013 compared to 2012.

Moving forward, we will continue to work with health authorities, our stakeholders and our clinical partners to build on DHCC's reputation as an internationally renowned centre for integrated medical services. We have collaborated with government authorities at various levels to ensure medical tourists have access to quality care.

This year, medical tourism will get a much-needed shot in the arm with DHCC increasing visibility at international medical conferences.



**Director, operations & marketing, American Institute of Minimally Invasive Spine Surgery (AIMIS Spine), Nikos Anastassiades describes how the facilities offer world class services**

AIMIS Spine consists of more than 30 leading US-based spine surgeons who come on an on-going rotational basis to Cyprus to perform advanced Minimally Invasive Spine surgeries on international patients.

AIMIS Spine surgeons perform exactly the same surgeries that are offered in the US, with the same cutting edge technologies as those used in the US, allowing patients from all over the world to receive the best of US spine healthcare outside of the States.

There are many advantages for patients to have their spine surgery at AIMIS Spine in Cyprus. Besides easy access to Cyprus and the support of a full multilingual concierge service which includes Arabic, the costs are also significantly cheaper than those of the US. AIMIS prices are around 60 per cent cheaper for patients than the same standard procedure would cost in the US.