

RUBRIC “7 QUESTIONS FROM MINISTRY OF HEALTH ABOUT MEDICAL TOURISM”

To: Director of the Helmholtz National Research Centre of Eye disease of the Ministry of Health of Russia, academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Doctor of Medical Sciences, Professor

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1. The federal project "Development of medical services export" of the Ministry of Health of Russian Federation has begun since 2019. What is the place of the international cooperation in your medical organization?

International cooperation in the Helmholtz National Research Centre of Eye disease of the Ministry of Health of Russia is given close attention. Our Center is the only ophthalmological institution in the Russian Federation with the status of the Partner Center of the WHO Collaborating Center for the blindness prevention. Our organization conducts research, develops new methods for the diagnosis and treatment in ophthalmopathology. The results of scientific research are annually reported at various international congresses and symposia in Germany, France, England, Italy, Switzerland, Japan, the USA, Canada and other countries.

In addition, the Helmholtz National Research Centre of Eye disease of the Ministry of Health of Russia is the largest center for the preparation of scientific and practical personnel for the ophthalmological service not only in Russia, but also in the CIS countries and far abroad. Our graduates work in almost all leading clinics in the CIS. The Center signed international scientific cooperation agreements with Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan in 2018 and 2019, therefore it is planned to conduct joint research, organize internships for young scientists and employees.

In November 2019, employees of the Helmholtz National Research Centre of Eye disease of the Ministry of Health of Russia visited Pisa (Italy, Tuscany) to exchange experiences and the latest methods of treatment and rehabilitation of patients with ophthalmic oncology.

Many foreign patients undergo treatment at our Center. These are mainly citizens of the former Soviet republics: Moldova, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Georgia, Armenia, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Belarus, Ukraine, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan. Along with this, citizens of Mongolia, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Poland, Serbia, France, Italy, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Tunisia, Libya, Lebanon, Syria also visit our the Center. All of them are provided with highly qualified medical care.

2. Does your medical organization have an increase of foreign patients in 2019 compared to 2017, and in your opinion with what factors it can be connected?

Compared with 2017, an increase of foreign patients at the Center remains at a high level, there is moderate growth in 2019. The Helmholtz

National Research Centre of Eye disease of the Ministry of Health of Russia is one of the leaders in the field of ophthalmology, and this is also known abroad. The Center has unique modern equipment that is used for the diagnosis and medical rehabilitation of ophthalmological patients.

3. What medical services in your organization are most in demand by foreign patients?

The whole range of medical services is in high demand: congenital pathology (including retinopathy of premature infants), glaucoma, eye tumors, round-the-clock emergency ophthalmological and traumatic care. Also in our center such services as vitreous surgery, laser coagulation due to dystrophic changes, tears and retinal detachment treatment are in great demand. If we talk about cancer, these are, first of all, intraocular melanomas and retinoblastomas. Every year, the issues of treatment of patients with endocrine ophthalmopathy are building capacity. These problems are successfully resolved in our Center.

4. What opportunities can you see for your medical organization in the implementation of the federal project “Development of the medical services export” of the Russian Ministry of Health?

Today, the world is a single organism. And Medical Tourism is a trend that is unlikely to change. However, it is important to consider that this trend should not interfere with public health programs. So that out of a desire to attract a foreign patient, we did not forget about our own, native patients.

New patients from other countries expand the boundaries of capabilities of any clinic, increase the credibility of the country as a whole. Additional income allows you to use this resource in the specific interests: the possibility of employee rewards, updating or upgrading technical capacities, improving the conditions for patients in the Center. Besides access to the international market has a positive effect on the quality of the services provided, it organizes and disciplines. In this sense, Medical tourism, of course, is good for the Center.

5. What features of working with foreign patients could you notice?

A significant part of foreign patients are labor migrants. As a rule, they get to the Emergency Department of our Center with serious mechanical eye injuries or burns. Often these patients are not provided with medical insurance, and the entire burden of the costs of their treatment lies with the Center. It is very important that the employer provides migrants with health insurance. As for foreigners coming for planned treatment, the main problems include the language barrier and features of a national or religious nature. However, these issues are easily resolved in the process.

6. Many foreign countries and their clinics spend great amount of resources on advertisement of their own brand. For the first time, in 2019, a federal

communication campaign was started in the Russian Federation aimed at popularizing the medical services in Russia. How and why foreign patients choose your organization?

The Helmholtz National Research Centre of Eye disease of the Ministry of Health of Russia has a long history. This year we celebrate the 120th anniversary of our Centr. This is a city hospital for the poor, founded by a doctor Adelheim in memory of Emperor Alexander the Third at the expense of Moscow philanthropist Alekseeva. Our organization was the flagship of Russian ophthalmology.

Our Center is well known all over the world. Scientific and clinical institution involved in the development of all the major problems of ophthalmology. Therefore, a foreign patient knows us well. Our leading experts are on the pages of major scientific journals. We are often approached by federal channels for expert opinions. Foreign patients come to us on recommendations of patients who were hospitalized at our Center earlier, as well as from doctors. Our Center provides assistance to patients who have problems with different complications.

7. Can you name the most representative case of the medical services provision to a foreign citizen?

We want to talk about the famous French actor Samy Naceri, who played the role of the Marseille taxi driver Daniel Morales in the first 4 parts of the TAXI movie.

In August **1918 (2018???)**, he came to us with a serious eye injury. The patient was consulted and examined by experienced specialists of the Center, after which a complex operation was carried out under the guidance of Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences V.V. Neroev. Thanks to the colossal mastery, the center's specialists managed to save the eye and eyesight of the injured actor. Under the supervision of the best specialists of the center, the actor completed a rehabilitation course. The result of the operation and treatment was brilliant. The patient feels great and his operated eye functions are at 100%