

PRESS RELEASE

THE NEW RISING STAR OF TOURISM,
HEALTH TOURISM,
THE REPRESENTATIVES OF HEALTH AND TOURISM SECTORS
CONVENED at the 1st INTERNATIONAL HEALTH TOURISM CONGRESS HELD IN ANTALYA

The health tourism issue in every aspect was handled, its challenges were discussed and future plans and programs were made at the congress held under the leadership of the ASSOCIATION OF IMPROVING HEALTH TOURISM and by the support of the HEALTH MINISTRY and the CULTURE AND TOURISM MINISTRY. The congress started by the attendance of 340 domestic and 53 foreign attendants from 29 different countries.

The Health Minister, Prof Dr. Recep AKDAĞ who had a speech in the inauguration of the 1st International Health Tourism Congress said that people, patients would like to use the freedom to choose their own doctors abroad in a today's world of freedom. In his speech Recep Akdağ told that they applied a rather serious transformation program in health field in past five years as a government and continued,

"In recent years private sector has made great investment in health in Turkey. The medical care in our country is now on par with Europe. Many patients have now come to our country from abroad for treatment. Our mission as the ministry is to pave the way for private sector by legislating due regulations".

Prof. Dr. Recep AKDAĞ also touched upon the importance of elderly and handicapped care for Turkey. Prof. Dr. Recep AKDAĞ said that our country that had a young and dynamic population would fill up the gap in this area indicating that the world population was rapidly growing old.

Prof. Dr. Recep Akdağ kept on talking,

"We will bring up qualified staff in health and elderly care fields by the reorganization of the curriculum of Health Vocational High Schools and Vocational Schools of Higher Education on forthcoming days. A significant part of our population is consisted by the young below the age of 28. We have to make use of them. Our cultural background, hospitality and perception that we love created for creator make us great advantageous in health tourism field. The world population is rapidly growing old. Turkey with its young population embraces the whole world".

Dr. Dursun Aydın, the chairman of the Association of Improving Health Tourism who also delivered a speech in the opening of the congress said, " Our country is really a tourism paradise with

its natural beauties, climate, cultural heritage and geographic location. However, our tourism activities is squeezed to 3-4 months within sea-sand and sun triangle”.

Dr. Dursun Aydın continued,

"In our country tourism activities should be expanded to whole country and 12 months. In this context alternative tourism must be improved. Health tourism is an important branch of alternative tourism since elderly population and chronic diseases are growing and treatment costs are increasing. Although we have a great potential in health tourism we have a small share, below 1% from this market. The world health tourism turnover is around USD 100 billion.

If our hospitals, thermals, plateaus are promoted abroad, particularly in the Middle East and Gulf countries well an average annual revenue of USD 10 billion to our economy can be achieved. From these regions there is a great demand for thermal, plastic surgery, organ transplantation, dentistry, tube baby and physical therapy fields.

1st International Health Tourism Congress will bring all the parties together in its field and it will be discussed about what has to be done for further progress of the sector". Dr. Aydın added, "We can evaluate health tourism in 3 main headings, 1- Medical Tourism, 2- Thermal Tourism, 3- Elderly Tourism”.

At the congress opening the congress chairman, Prof. Dr. Zeki Karagülle also delivered a speech. In his speech Karagülle referred to the importance of thermal tourism.

In his speech the deputy undersecretary of the health ministry, Nihat Tosun said that Turkey came into prominence in health tourism as a result of the recent developments in the world.

The undersecretary of the culture and tourism ministry, İsmet Yıldız stated that our country had important advantages with its available resources in health tourism. He also said, "Health tourism will be one of the most important headings of tourism in the future”.

The head of the health affairs commission of Turkish Grand National Assembly and MP of Trabzon also said, "In recent years many patients have begun travelling to our country as a result of the decisions taken by the government”.

The governer of Antalya, Alaaddin Yüksel told that the most favorite sector was tourism in 21st century and 900 million people travelled abroad in 2007 for treatment. Alaaddin Yüksel added that sport tourism, congress tourism and health tourism are the branches of alternative tourism.