



Montserrat Fontbona, MD - Chile  
ISAPS Patient Safety Committee Chair

### **Medical Tourism Awareness for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery Patients**

Medical tourism is the act of traveling abroad to receive various medical services. Specifically in aesthetic plastic surgery, medical tourism is currently an increasingly growing reality worldwide, with patients traveling to different countries to undergo surgeries and various non-surgical procedures. However, the rise in medical tourism has been accompanied by a growing concern about quality of care and patient safety due to a lack of regulations<sup>1</sup>.

Patients search for medical tourism for multiple reasons, including economics, a variety of surgical options, or specific specialists for a particular surgery<sup>1</sup>.

While the cost savings upfront attract many unsuspecting patients from their country of origin, there are significant patient safety issues surrounding short- and long-term follow-up and the management and cost of complications<sup>2</sup>. Complications often require prolonged treatment periods, with high rates of hospitalization and surgical management<sup>3</sup>. To aid in reducing morbidity and mortality from medical tourism, regulatory bodies should educate and empower the public to help them make informed medical decisions<sup>2</sup>.

ISAPS brings together certified plastic surgeons and leaders in aesthetics from many countries. Its mission is to inspire and nurture Aesthetic Education Worldwide<sup>®</sup> for patient safety. A fundamental part of ISAPS' work is to provide accurate information to the public, promoting patient safety.

The annual **ISAPS Global Survey 2022** established that Mexico, Colombia, Thailand, and Turkiye are the countries where patients most frequently travel to undergo surgery abroad<sup>5</sup>.

Ensuring patients' safety and reducing the risks and complications that can occur from medical tourism, ISAPS aims to educate and empower patients to help them make the best-informed medical decisions when deciding to perform a procedure or surgery abroad.

ISAPS, in an international collaborative effort, calls for awareness of its **Safety Diamond**<sup>4</sup>, whose four facets should be considered when deciding to undertake surgery abroad.

They are:

## PATIENT SAFETY AWARENESS

### **1. The patient -**

- must inform the plastic surgeon before surgery of specific illnesses or medical conditions, the medications taken and previous surgeries.

- has to receive information about the possible risks and complications associated with the surgery and answer their questions before the surgery.

### **2. The procedure or surgery -**

- the plastic surgeon must discuss with the patient in advance all aspects related to the surgery or procedure, whether the patient is suitable or not for the specified surgery, and if modifying certain habits before the surgery is mandatory.

- the plastic surgeon should explain all available treatment alternatives, and preoperative workup and plan for the follow-up.

- if going to have surgery abroad, the patient should be advised on how many days in advance they should arrive before having surgery and how long to stay post-surgery, to reduce the risks, mainly of thrombosis problems, on long trips.

### **3. Certified plastic surgeon:**

- the patient needs to be sure that the surgeon is not only board-certified (specialist) in plastic surgery but also has proper qualifications and experience in the specific surgery or procedure.

- if having surgery abroad, encourage patients always to prefer ISAPS members.

### **4. Accreditation of surgical facility:**

- the patient should ensure that the location and facilities where the treatment and recovery will take place are approved by the country's medical regulatory authorities and meet all safety standards.

- be aware that regulations for accreditation vary by country.

As a society, ISAPS constitutes a network of plastic surgeons worldwide and adheres to all patient safety and accreditation standards. When a patient elects to perform surgery abroad with a member of ISAPS, they can also consult with a member of ISAPS in their country of origin if necessary.

Remembering these four facets of the [ISAPS Safety Diamond](#) will help patients make the best decision and ensure their safety when performing surgery abroad.

## **REFERENCES:**

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