

Medical tourism in Costa Rica: Opportunities for nursing innovation

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Based on this poster presentation, learners will be able to:

- Describe reasons for dramatic increases in medical tourism by Americans
- Explain why Costa Rica is one of the leading destinations for medical tourism
- Compare healthcare quality and safety between the US and Costa Rica
- Describe opportunities for geriatric nurses and nursing entrepreneurs related to Costa Rica's national goal to become a world leader in medical tourism

Medical tourism by Americans has seen an annual growth of 25-30% in recent years due to the high cost of medical treatment in the US and large numbers of uninsured Americans. There is speculation that a provider shortage in the US, associated with the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, may contribute to the prevalence of medical tourism. Medical tourism at a global level has developed in countries with high quality and affordable medical care, political stability and natural beauty. Costa Rica is emerging as a leader in medical tourism and anticipates that it, combined with a retirement community industry, will be the main drivers of the future Costa Rican economy, in much the same way that eco-tourism was developed in the 1980s. Consumers of medical services seek care that is familiar and modeled after their home country. Potential opportunities exist for American nurses to serve as consultants to hospitals, assisted living and long term care facilities in Costa Rica that are geared to the care of North Americans.

Biography

Joan M. Nelson is an adult nurse practitioner with an active geriatric practice. She earned a DNP in 2005 from the University of Colorado where she is currently an Associate Professor and teaches in both the master's and DNP programs. She has multiple publications in the area of quality improvement and gerontology. She has served as a test writer for the American Nurses Credentialing center and is currently an evaluator for the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education.

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