

How to Attract More International Patients to Your Practice

Plastic surgery has been increasingly popular in the last decade, and demand is projected to increase steadily over the next decade. With this kind of worldwide growth, it makes sense to find ways to advertise your practice to patients abroad as well as at home. Here we offer a basic guide to learning how to help international patients come to you.

- 1. Offer in-demand services.** The [ISPAS Global Statistics](#) for 2014 lists breast augmentation, facelifts, liposuction, blepharoplasty, Botox and dermal fillers among the most popular procedures performed around the globe. If you offer any of these, competition is probably intense. But you have the surety of knowing that patients will always be seeking these procedures.
- 2. Focus on what makes your practice stand out from your competition.** Why should patients choose you surgeon? Cost alone is seldom a good answer, especially for highly specialized medical services that require cutting-edge equipment and facilities. Advertising cut-rate prices may lead your prospective patients to assume you offer cut-rate services as well. Instead, focus on what makes you different, even better: perhaps you offer a brand new service or technology, or a relatively unusual procedure (such as vaginal rejuvenation). Perhaps you're located in a popular tourist destination city or country, or your region is hosting an international conference or sporting event that will draw international visitors.
- 3. Make the patient experience as smooth and easy as possible.** If you can't work one-on-one with each overseas patient to make arrangements, consider appointing a Director of International Facilitation (or establish a similar role) from among your staff. The duties of this position should include:
 - Helping patients gather and send all medical paperwork in advance (MRIs, photos, patient questionnaires and release forms). Some plastic surgeons find it helpful to require a "patient expectations" form from overseas patients, in order to be sure that communication is clear on both sides.
 - Assisting patients with obtaining passports, visas and immunizations.
 - Facilitating travel arrangements like airfare and hotel reservations. Some practices even offer direct-booking services, incorporating these expenses into the patient's fee.
 - Providing a basic guide to local attractions or points of interest.
 - Offering special promotions during significant international events your country is hosting, such as the Olympics, World Cup, etc.
 - Allowing some flexibility in financing and payment. There are online platforms specifically designed for "medical tourism" that allow patients to deposit funds directly into a holding account in your home country. Some plastic surgeons allow a certain percentage of these funds (for example, 20%) to be forwarded as a deposit to secure a patient's booking. Additional payments can also be forwarded in increments. If a patient decides for any

reason not to proceed, he or she only pays for the services used up to the point of cancellation.

- 4. Be available.** A big part of streamlining the patient experience is to make it easy to get in touch with you. Many plastic surgeons with a strong international client base offer consultations and answer questions via Skype, email, live chat or telephone.

The [ISAPS website](#) offers resources for plastic surgery “tourists” under the [Medical Travel Guide](#) tab. These can form the basis of your own “information packet” that you offer to patients at a consult. Above all, the simplest, oldest and most effective way to attract new patients and keep current patients coming back is simple: do excellent work! The internet has ensured that word-of-mouth can now spread around the world. Why not make that work for you?