

Letter to Editor

PUBLIC HEALTH TOURISM IN INDONESIA. IS IT POSSIBLE?

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Dear Sir,

Medical tourism has grown significantly in Southeast Asia, especially in Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia.¹ Many people travel to these countries to search an affordable and convenient health care. While Indonesia, in contrast, may not be a destination country for medical tourism, but rather to be the source of patients for its neighbors, and the number of patients in Indonesia would be significantly increased.² In another word, when other countries increase their services for medical tourism, Indonesia still works in building infrastructure of health care system with lack of medical doctors in the country. It seems that Indonesia is far for bringing the trend of medical tourism comparing with other countries.

If considering the land of Indonesia fulfilled with beautiful places, Indonesia actually has a great potential to become tourism destination.³ Public health tourism might need to be introduced if looking at the slow progress of medical tourism in Indonesia. The concept of promoting well-being and preventive of disease can be a new strategy to marketing and the local

economy,⁴ for instance the scheme of bike-hire can be potentially implemented, such as cycling on the edge of the beach, or in the middle of forest, or cycling at night like most Thai people do today as the new trend of Thai community. It also might be rowing boat on the beach, and other types of sports that can attract people interest as long as related to and can be implemented in the nature of Indonesia. The main point is that the concept of public health tourism aims to improve health condition and also creating something unique as a selling power for tourist destinations.

However, to implement this concept might not be easy, promoting public health is very complex, and it cannot be accomplished only by Public Health Scholars, it needs the power of interprofessional health collaboration, especially a better coordination between health professions that will bring harmony and good health outcomes. In line with this, the government of Indonesia needs to enhance the health systems that allow health professions fully collaborate each other, especially between medical doctors, public health scholars, community nurses, and also social workers. Last, the author

remarks, “it is reasonably assumed that public health tourism is a great deal to bring Indonesia as a tourism destination country.”

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