

Marketplace

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Canada welcomes its medical tourists

Canada is getting in on U.S. "medical tourism," making it easier for Americans looking for more affordable health care to visit the country for treatment. Stacey Vanek-Smith looks into the trend's growing profitability.



Stethoscope and \$5 bills (iStockPhoto)

TEXT OF STORY

SCOTT JAGOW:

You've probably heard the term "medical tourism." This is when people fly to other countries to get health care -- joint replacements or surgeries, mainly. In most cases, these people don't have health insurance. Asia is the hot spot for medical tourism, but that's a long way to go. Canada is much closer. Here's Stacey Vanek-Smith.

STACEY VANEK SMITH:

Choice Medical Services has launched the first Canadian medical care program geared towards Americans.

Founder Darren Jorgenson says the facility will mean easier flights and shorter trips for U.S. customers. And, he says, it's still a great deal for the uninsured.

DARREN JORGENSEN:

Yeah, most of the patients are saving approximately 70-80 percent on what they would have had to pay for the same procedure in the U.S.

Medical tourism is expected to become a multibillion-dollar business in the next five years... Health care strategist Les Funtleder says that's a major red flag.

LES FUNTLEDER:

To be forced to go to another country to get your care indicates that we probably do have a problem here in the U.S. that needs to be addressed.

Until then, business looks poised to continue booming. Medical tourism is growing about 25 percent a year.

I'm Stacey Vanek-Smith for Marketplace.