

# It's time to reassess the cost of having a 'nip and tuck' abroad

Submitted by: ICrossing Ltd

Tuesday, 12 August 2008

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Credit crunch negates the benefits of having weight-loss and cosmetic surgery overseas

An unexpected bonus of the reported recession and credit crunch could be making health tourism for procedures such as cosmetic and weight loss surgery (<http://www.spirehealthcare.com/weightloss/>), such as gastric banding, a thing of the past.

Last year a whopping 73% of Brits were said to be considering some form of cosmetic surgery (<http://www.spirehealthcare.com/cosmetic/>), with many tempted by the perceived benefits of having their procedures abroad.

Indeed, the British Association of Aesthetic and Plastic Surgeons (BAAPS), reports that the average Brit spends more time considering their choice of bathroom tiles than the pros and cons of going under the knife abroad, despite this option carrying a host of hidden risks.

Today's exchange rates negates cost savings

Take the UK's most popular cosmetic procedure, the 'nose job'. Last year, you would have paid around 40% less to have it done in a country such as Belgium. At today's rate of exchange, the savings are negligible.

Add to this the cost of your time, escalating fuel, flight and hotel prices plus the possibility of follow-up visits being required to correct any unforeseen problems. Compare it to the benefits of having the operation here, in the UK, by a reputable surgeon at a local, well equipped private hospital, such as Spire Cheshire Hospital (<http://www.spirehealthcare.com/cheshire/>) in Warrington, for a flat fee of £3,660, inclusive of all hospital accommodation and follow-up visits.

At this point, the financial, health and practical benefits of having surgery at home become apparent!

Top UK surgeons spell out the benefits of UK treatment

Spire Healthcare (<http://www.spirehealthcare.com>) – the 36-strong private hospital network formally owned by BUPA - has some of the most experienced weight loss and cosmetic surgeons in the world including the President of BAAPS, advisors to NICE (National Institute of Clinical Excellence) and BOSPA (British Obesity Patient Advisory Service).

Collectively, they see the much publicised 'credit crunch' as an opportunity to spell out the financial, healthcare and practical benefits of having surgery at home.

"One effect of the credit crunch and deflated British pound is that there is no longer a significant cost advantage in having surgical procedures - such as breast reconstructions, liposuction and face lifts - abroad," said Mr Douglas McGeorge, President of BAAPS and consultant aesthetic surgeon at Spire

Cheshire Hospital.

It's a development that will benefit Brits in many ways by making treatment abroad less appealing financially and negating the many drawbacks this entails, such as the fact that::

1. There is little or no regulation of surgeons operating overseas. Here, people can be safe in the knowledge that their surgeon is registered with the GMC (General Medical Council) and industry bodies such as BAAPS or BAPRA (British Association of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons)
2. Reputable surgeons invariably operate out of their own private practice within a suitably equipped hospital such as Spire Cheshire. For surgeons practising in a commercial clinic that 'imports' its patients there is no incentive to deliver best practice results or manage their patients treatment plan effectively
3. Gold standard aftercare is essential following any surgical procedure. In the case of gastric banding successful weight loss depends almost entirely on post-operative follow up and regular band adjustments
4. The cost of surgery in the UK includes follow-up visits and any remedial work required. A patient operated on abroad could find themselves shelling out more money if their procedure does not go to plan and has to be fixed by a local surgeon or they may need to call on NHS emergency services if a life-threatening complication arises. (As yet the number of people requiring remedial work as a result of overseas surgery is not known however this is now being researched by BAAPS which believes its incidence to be significant).

Mr Michael Rhodes, an advisor to NICE, BOSPA and consultant gastrointestinal surgeon at Spire Norwich Hospital, is credited with performing the first three gastric band operations ever performed in the UK. In the last year, he has conducted emergency operations on three patients to correct gastric bands fitted in Belgium.

"Patients tend to focus attention of the surgical procedure itself and underestimate the need for post-operative care. The truth is that, for weight-loss surgery to be effective, follow up visits are vital. At least 50% of weight-loss due to gastric banding is due to the quality of aftercare services such as band adjustments, post-operative dietary advice and monitoring.

"At Spire Norwich we charge a flat rate of £7,500 for gastric-banding, which includes band adjustment visits and a life-long, nurse led follow up programme, available monthly wherever you are in the UK.

"Another issue with having surgery abroad is the fact these surgeons are not bound by NICE guidelines which require weight-loss surgery to be performed only on people with a BMI of 35+. For those who are simply overweight – with a BMI of 33 for example – surgery is not appropriate. They'll get the same results from a tailored dietary and lifestyle regimen.

"Another benefit of having surgery in a UK hospital, such as Spire Norwich, which cannot be over-emphasised is the fact that our patients can learn from the experiences of their peers. We, like

other Spire hospitals, run regular patient support groups which deliver huge benefits to anyone considering or who has undergone surgery, enabling them to draw on the life experiences of like-minded people. When you have weight-loss surgery abroad this is just not an option,” he said.

Mr Trevor O’Neill, aesthetic surgeon at Spire Norwich Hospital, stressed the need for those considering cosmetic surgery to attend an initial consultation and then take the time to assess the pros and cons of their operation before returning for a further consultation if they choose to proceed.

“The fact is that a face lift, for instance, requires around three hours of surgery, under general anaesthetic, and is therefore not a decision that should be taken lightly. Then there’s the importance of attending regular follow-up visits and having easy access to remedial work – at no extra cost – should this be required.

“Against this backdrop, having an operation during a quick flit abroad is just not the best way to proceed. It’s not like you’re having a haircut...this is invasive surgery with potentially life-changing consequences. The choices you make now don’t last for a fortnight, they last a lifetime,” he said.

-ENDS-

Note to editors:

Spire Healthcare is the second largest private hospital provider in the UK with 36 hospitals and a total of 1,983 beds. It was formed in 2007 from the sale of Bupa Hospitals to leading private equity company Cinven. Spire Healthcare provides services for private and insured patients as well as NHS funded patients under the government’s Free Choice initiative. It also offers cosmetic and weight-loss surgery. It treats 930,000 patients a year, employs 7,600 staff and works with over 3,000 medical consultants. [www.spirehealthcare.com](http://www.spirehealthcare.com).