MANGALIA – LONG LASTING HEALTH TOURISM DESTINATION IN ROMANIA

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Abstract

A national and international interest balneo-climatic resort, located on the coast of the Black Sea, on the same latitude with Monaco, San Remo and Nice, Mangalia combines the ancient callatian vestiges (IVth century BC) with the abundance of therapeutical factors.

In Mangalia there is combination of great recovery and therapeutical potential natural balneary factors unique in Europe:

- Mezothermal sulphurous waters (20 - 26° C) – which due to their composition and therapeutical effects have a character unique in Europe.
- Sea water with a total mineralization of 15,5 g/l
- Therapeutically mud from Techirghiol Lake
- Marine bioclimate reach in saline aerosols

Therefore, we consider that in balneology, the concept of Health Tourism can be implemented offering development perspectives of the medical tourism, of the national health system, and, why not, of the Romanian tourism, even becoming a national strategy.

As to Mangalia Balneary Sanatorium, the management goals, are to promote the concept of health tourism, with the following components:

- medical - Medical Tourism
- educational - Educational Tourism
- relaxation - Relaxation Tourism

All of the above restrain a major objective, which is the development of the quality of medical services, the attraction of a superior number of “patients- tourists” to Mangalia Sanatorium and the development of the “health tourism” concept.

Keywords: tourism, health, Mangalia, medical, therapeutical, development, sea.

JEL Classification: I15

1. Introduction

Situated on the coast of Mangalia, the national interest Balneary and Recovery Sanatorium is a select balneary establishment in the southern area of the seaside.
Mangalia holds a combination of great recovery and therapeutical potential natural balneary factors unique in Europe:

- Mezothermal sulphurous waters (20 - 26° C) – which due to their composition and therapeutical effects have an unique character in Europe.
- Sea water with a total mineralization of 15,5 g/l.
- Therapeutical mud from Techirghiol Lake.
- Marine bioclimate rich in saline aerosols.

As structure, our balneary treatment facility encloses:

- an accommodation facility structurated as follows;
  - 2 hospital sections of 75 places each;
  - 1 sanatorial section of 200 places – 2* Callatis Hotel;
- 2 modern treatment units:
  - the first with a capacity of 450 patients per day serving the in-patients;
  - and the second with a capacity of 850 patients per day functioning as ambulatory.

The Balneary Sanatorium also encloses:

- modern consultation offices;
- investigations sector – functional examinations;
- medical tests laboratory;
- functional examinations;
- radiodiagnosis laboratory;
- guard house- with telemedicine for cardiology;
- psychology- psychotherapy office;
- geriatrics office.

Since 2 years ago, Mangalia Balneary Sanatorium disposes of a modern SPA-wellness-relaxation sector, sanitary authorized, where acupuncture treatments, hydrozonotherapy, aromatic oils massage, vulcanic stones massage, relaxation therapy, melotherapy, sauna, sea water pool, fitness, reflexotherapy are effectuated.

The activity of the Balneary Sanatorium has been authorized in December 2011 following the ISO 9001:2008 standards.

2. Activity and Premises

The balneology is an extremly complex medical field which has the virtue to treat with less secondary effects than the medicamentous treatment and to permit the patient to avail himself of a treatment in advantageous conditions, redressing his health condition in a relaxing environment, away from the everyday problems.

In this case, the patient is no longer just a simple case, who has to “bear” a medical treatment, but a person who can enjoy body and soul benefit, always being accompanied by a professional medical team.
Our goal is to engage more patients, of all ages, offering treatment and relaxation possibilities for all categories.

That is why, we consider that in balneology in generally and especially in Mangalia, the concept of Health Tourism can be successfully implemented, offering development perspectives of the medical tourism, national health system and why not, of the Romanian tourism, even becoming a national strategy.

As to Mangalia Balneary Sanatorium, the management goals are to promote and implement the concept of health tourism, with the following components:

- medical - **Medical Tourism**
- educational - **Educational Tourism**
- relaxation - **Relaxation Tourism**

The balneary and recovery treatment enters into a privileged space-time, therefore being necessary the exact description of the profile “patient- tourist”, in order to identify the treatment adequate to the pathology, but also the means necessary for relaxation and pleasure.

In the last years the “patients- tourists” of the Sanatorium have mainly been active persons (45-64 years) coming from the urban medium, but also seniors, as the age average has dropped in the last years, we can develop several strategies.

Therefore, for the active “patients-tourists” (45-64 years), considering the specific treatment given within the Sanatorium, this is a privileged facility for a real health education and for the good use of medication, which actually represents a form of therapeutical education.

In this perspective, the awareness campaigns regarding the risk factors for health, as well as the prevention allowing a prompt intervention against everything that may aggravate a diagnosed pathology, find their place within the Balneary and Recovery Sanatorium in Mangalia.

For the elderly, the Balneary and Recovery Sanatorium can be considered a “timer for a beautiful oldness”. This concept, promoted in the last year in France, worths attention, as the level of persons over 65 years is increasing, the balneary facilities, respectively Mangalia, can offer them a space and a time of relaxation, calm and harmony, but also, the occasion to retrieve their dynamism, confidence and serenity.

Once getting old, the chronic pathologies are hard to bear, but the stay in Mangalia Balneary Sanatorium facilitates the improvement of the health condition and of “good”, without being necessary to increase the drugs “input”, a very important thing for the medical system.

Which are the goals proposed for the implementation of the Health Tourism?

a. Identification of the needs, commodity and expectations of the “patients-tourists” coming to the sanatorium in Mangalia.
b. Global monitorization of the “patient-tourist” effectuating a balneary treatment - “health cure”.

c. Presentation of the SBRM (Mangalia Balneary- Recovery Sanatorium) as a complementarity model.

d. Evaluation of the aspects considering the Balneary Sanatorium a “timer for a beautiful oldness”

e. Development of the SBRM competence in prevention domain.

f. Development of the scientifical research activity, of applied procedures and therapies:
   - talassotherapy;
   - anti-aging therapy;
   - nutritional therapy;

3. How do we apply all of these

1) Identification of the needs, commodity and expectations of the “patients-tourists” coming for a balneary treatment.

As we have already pointed out, it is very important to correctly define the PATIENT’S PROFILE at the beginning of the balneary treatment.

This is made by evaluating the physical and mental condition of the patient and his relatives - which allows the proposition, parallel to the recovery programs, of certain physical activity and diet(nutritional), in order to improve the patient’s global monitorization.

Starting from the relation between the medical approach and the balneary treatment in the case of the pathologies they represent, the “patients- tourists” benefit from the professional experience of the medical team and the means they use to improve the health condition, combining the classic balneary treatment and the spa-wellness procedures in the time off, under strict medical observation (which is extremely important), but who offers a way to spend the spare, relaxation time in a special climate.

2) Global monitorization of the “patient-tourist”

The patient arriving to the Balneary and Recovery Sanatorium in Mangalia, makes an active and participant step being subject and actor of the medical team action, becoming its “partner”.

The global monitorization defines by:

- information
- functional and therapeutical education;
- prevention;

To prevent and especially slow down the aging process or any form of handicap.
Accompaning and assisting patients presenting chronic pathologies, especially of the elderly, is a public health goal, intending to delay the evolution of the pathology and to adapt the treatment to the aging matter.

In this purpose, the balneologist can establish homogenous patient groups, by ages and chronic pathologies.

4. How to monitorize a “patient-tourist” relation

a. By effectuating a general health balance – obligatory when coming to the sanatorium. This is interesting for the public health, considering that after the age of 60 years, 3 major health problems occur such as pathologies:
   - muscular-skeletal
   - cardio-vascular
   - neoplastic

For the “patient-tourist”, the balance is important because afterwards in the sanatorium, a real prevention program can be initiated.

b. By effectuating a medical balance systematically practised within the sanatorium (at the middle and at the end of the stay). The activity allows the combination of different parameters to track down some ignored infraclinical functional exceptions and their limitation.

Actually, they are effectuated through:
   - anamnesis;
   - detailed clinical examination;
   - general health condition evaluation investigations:
     - walking;
     - cognitive function;
     - balance;
     - psychological condition;
     - perception between the quality of life at individual level;
   - paraclinical investigations – if case (laboratory, EKG, radiogram, oscillometry);
   - monitorization in the ER whenever necessary;

The efficiency may increase by organizing an interdisciplinary collaboration: house physician- balneologist- cardiologist- orthopedist-psychologist- psychiatrist, to permit the efectuation of well structured general balances which shall also continue after the patient finishes the balneary treatment, but in the same time to have a well defined image about the evolution between the treatments.
5. **Presentation of the sbrm competence as complementarity**

The treatment effectuated in the Balneary Sanatorium situates in the prolongs the one in the hospital, therefore, the interdisciplinary and interprofessional resources find their place in a complementarity model.

The recovery and readaptation treatment is a privileged moment to convince the “patient- tourist” of the interest of the connection between these institutions in correctly evaluating his health conditions.

For example, in case of muscular-skeletal affections, osteoporosis, fracture risk by falling, patients within the global monitorization, can receive specific information, but also functional education.

Many patients include in the global monitorization of their way of life a part of the medical procedures of the treatment. They can change their perception about illness and health, by applying at home their favourite exercises and diets.

6. **Evaluation of aspects concerning the balneary sanatorium as a “timer to a beautiful aging”**

The aging process is one of OMS priorities who has set four types of aging:
- well turned;
- adapted;
- usual, who determines fragility;
- dependent;

As the number of elderly is increasing (the scenario provides a 50% increment between 2000-2040) the concept of a “gentle aging is a new indicator, that can be successfully applied and evaluated within a balneary-type institution.

As for our Sanatorium, the elderly presenting chronic pathologies receive particular attention from the balneologist who permanently keeps in touch with the house physician.

This coordination can be useful to identify the factors leading to dependence.

Therefore, a prevention consultation starting from the age of 65, allows an early identification of the risk factors and postpones the dependence phase.

The prevention consultation becomes a health prevention mean and permits the personalization of a medical transit.

Within the sanatorium, this type of consultation is an early diagnosis mean but in the same time a moment of consultancy/orientation of the patient and must respond to the immediate needs of the patients, so they receive the proper answers regarding:
- the physical activity;
- nutrition;
- therapeutical education;
- functional education.
The prevention and therapeutical education represent at the level of the country, an insufficiently developed potential.

On this line, we have developed a project with an important role in the primary, secondary and tertiary prevention, considering the pluridisciplinary skills of the medical staff.

1) **Primary prevention** - consists in indentifying, pointing out and treating risks before the occurrence of any health problems;

2) **Secondary prevention** - identification of frequent pathologies in the balneary environment (obesity, cardio-vascular risk factors, ostheoporosis) with the role of discovering an affection in order to prevent an illness, a psychological or social issue;

3) **Tertiary prevention** - aims the prevention of complications or illness relapse, meaning - medical:
   - psychological;
   - social readaptation.

**Example:** In the domain of cardio-vascular risk factors, Mangalia has an important sulphureous waters potential, benefic for the arterial pressure (by the peripheral vasodilator effect, rebalancing of the vegetative tonus, influencing the hypertensive patient in a positive way, balancing the arterial pressure). In this context, the patients can be informed and oriented towards the professional physician in the sanatorium, medical reports being sent at the end of their stay to the house physicians so they ensure a continuous observation of their health condition.

The education of the alimentary habits represents a major concern of the medical team, as a stay in our facility may bring forward some modifications of the patients in this matter and the initiation of a nutritional education program (theoretical and practical), the patient being able to continue it at home.

7. **Research perspectives**

We mention the moor coal mud as a possible high potential future perspective and novelty. The moor coal mud found in Mangalia, the only maritime turbary in our country has been studied through the acknowledgment of its chemical composition and physical properties for the use in therapeutical purposes, the last research dating from 2007. A local and national policy has been imposed for the continuation of researches.

These studies have indicated that the moor coal mud in Mangalia represents a valued natural resource in balneary treatments - being a moor coal with advanced humification, rich in organic and bituminous substances, soaked with sulphurous water, with a high content of sulphhydryl hydrogen.

In the process of preparation of the coal moor with mineral waters the two mineralizations will interfere resulting a mineralization different to the one effectuated by combining fresh water, with antiinflammatory, reduction, sensibilization and
biostimulative effect (MANGALIA CLAY which should be researched and valued for its effects, in other countries being an import income source).

Through the present study we have identified some development perspectives:

a. **Thalassotherapy** - the name comes from the greek big “thalassa” is a natural therapy consisting in using for therapeutical purposes of sea water combined with sun, marine climate and marine origin products- mud, rich in minerals or sea ore-rich in proteins.

In MANGALIA, the thalassotherapy has been successfully effectuated and diversified in the last period:
- aerosols;
- mud packs;
- mud baths;
- plants bath;
- hydromassage;
- aquagym;
- kinetotherapy in sea water pool;

b. **anti‑aging therapy** - for aging prevention – geriatric examinations, treatments with Gerovital, Aslavital, other cosmetical treatments;

c. **nutritional therapy**.

8. **Conclusions**

Following the above presentation we can draw the next conclusions:

1) The balneology is the most at hand solution for the development of the Health Tourism.

2) The traditional balneology can be combined with complementary therapies and spa-wellness procedures, effectuated only under medical observation.

3) The balneary institutions are the ones which through their services can easily maintain a constant number of “patients-tourists” during the whole year.

4) The medical act is complex, performing prevention, treatment and/or recovery, assuring a holistic approach of the “patient- tourist”, treatment cure providing a physical, mental and social well-being condition both individually and family- becoming a real health cure.

5) The health tourism effectuated by balneology and balneary institutions offer economic resources for the health system, but with an increment of the system’ s quality through a complex medical and professional act, and in the same time an important source to increase the income.

6) The balneology- as presented within and with additional improvements may become an “Excellence pole” in the domain of the actual chronic patholgy prevention.
7) MANGALIA – is definitively a long lasting destination for the Health Tourism, where the sea, sun, therapeutical factors, confort and why not, people, make spending a memorable stay and real health cures possible.

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