

Malaysia a hotbed for medical tourism'

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Singapore: Medical tourism, easy regulatory guidelines, a lack of strict price regulation and an increasing elderly population will be the main contributors to the rapid rise in Malaysia's healthcare market value by 2020, according to research and consulting firm GlobalData.

The analysis firm reports that these factors, as well as the fact that Malaysia is not dependent on imported branded products, will provide the necessary impetus for the market growth, which the Malaysian Organisation of Pharmaceutical Industries estimates will increase to approximately \$3.7 billion by 2020.

Mr Joshua Owide, director of healthcare industry dynamics, GlobalData says, "Malaysia has been a hotbed for medical tourism over the past few years, with increasing numbers of foreign patients visiting the country for treatment. This growth has been supported by government policies, such as tax exemption for hospitals.

"The implementation of a National Health Insurance System, which, pending parliamentary approval, will lead to universal healthcare coverage, is expected to be another driver of Malaysia's pharmaceutical market. Currently, the lack of universal healthcare insurance is forcing people to purchase medicine from the open market, resulting in high out-of-pocket expenditure."

GlobalData states that government initiatives aimed at increasing investment in the pharmaceutical industry, including Entry Point Projects and National Key Economic Areas, have so far been successful.

Mr Owide concludes, "While reforms, such as free outpatient registration for the elderly, will impose a financial and logistical burden on Malaysia's healthcare system, they will also stimulate growth by the end of the forecast period."