



Global Healthcare Accreditation Standards

For Medical Travel and International Patient Services

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Overview

Since the third millennium BC, when Mesopotamians traveled to Tell Brak, Syria, seeking a cure for eye disorders, patients have traveled for care and wellness. Currently, medical travel and/or medical tourism has become a well reasoned option for care to millions of patients seeking better or more timely access, lower cost, specialty treatments not available to them, or a higher level of quality of care. Indeed, some insurers, employers and governmental bodies now include medical travel, whether within one's country or internationally, as an option for provider network coverage.

In this rapidly growing and evolving market, there are few standards and best practices specific to the medical travel cycle. The continued increase in medical travel and international travel has necessitated hospitals, dental practices, radiology practices, ambulatory surgery centers and other healthcare and wellness venues to acquire new organizational skills and staff skills to support a positive, safe, and patient centered and engaged experience in their facility. These skills include cultural sensitivity, the ability to communicate in languages with the patient population they serve, new uses of websites and social media to attract new patients as well as to validate the high quality of care provided within their organization, and the implementation of sophisticated call centers with associated hardware and software support to connect to the patient and their families and ensure a seamless experience for the entire care continuum.

These GHA standards focus on that improvement of the overall medical travel or international patient experience.





The Purpose of Global Healthcare Accreditation Standards

The Global Healthcare Accreditation (GHA) program is the first independent program to offer comprehensive and independent oversight of medical travel/tourism programs, and defines the standards and core competencies that organizations seeking to care for such patients must embody. Building on the ten years of experience that the Medical Tourism Association has accomplished in working with key stakeholder groups, including providers, insurers, employers and Ministers of Health and Tourism, these standards have been developed to represent the standards of excellence and best practices that organizations serving the medical traveler population should embrace.

The standards cover seventeen core competencies, including both clinical and non-clinical services. In particular, the standards cover the unique needs and expectations of patients traveling for care that must be addressed to ensure good outcomes, both from a clinical perspective as well as patient experience. Both clinical and non-clinical services must be managed through different stages of the medical travel cycle including, but not limited to: inquiry and appointment processes, arrival at the destination following a seamless travel experience, pre and post-operative or treatment stages, billing, medical record transfer and after-care and post-discharge follow-up. Through all of these stages, the organization must be transparent and the patient engaged in making decisions and understanding the risk and cost of the treatments.

The standards spell out measurement activities as well as improvement initiatives pertinent to the medical travel patient.



Standards Development Overview

The GHA Standards Version 3.0 were built upon Version 3.0 of the International Patient Services Certification standards, historically distributed by the Medical Tourism Association (a strategic alliance for the GHA Program) but have been strengthened and broadened to include the entire medical travel cycle.

GHA's medical travel accreditation standards were developed in consultation with leading experts in the medical travel and medical tourism industry, including representatives from insurers, employers, and other key stakeholder groups relevant to the global industry. Exemplary practices were included in areas such as Ethics, Cultural Competency, Transparency and Compliance, Patient Advocacy, and Travel and Tourism.

Global Healthcare Accreditation (GHA) standards are the foundation of a systematic and objective evaluation process of an organizations approach to the management of medical travel and/or international patient services. Each standard is part of a comprehensive framework that creates awareness towards meaningful management and quantifiable performance regarding medical travel or international patients services in order for organizations to improve over time. GHA Standards focus on the entire medical travel cycle and specifically how all steps in the cycle contribute to a overall safe, high quality medical travel experience. GHA Standards have been designed in a manner that considers various economics of scale, consumer expectations, cultural differences and stages of development for health systems.

Standards Development Process

GHA Standards are reviewed and approved annually by the GHA Standards Development Committee while new editions of standards are published every three (3) years. Should any minor changes be incorporated and/or industry trends demand reasonable additions or retractions, all clients, prospective consumers and surveyors will be informed (and trained) when required. In general, new standards are incorporated if they relate to the medical travel cycle and have a new or added positive impact to standards that already exist.

Feedback or Opinion on Standards

The Global Healthcare Accreditation Program website, www.globalhealthcareaccreditation.com, includes an identified process where individuals or organizations can provide comments on current standards. This interactive process is part of the overall continuous improvement process by the GHA Program to better serve the international healthcare industry and to consistently deliver value to clients.



What is new with Version 3.0?

GHA Version 3.0 replaces the previous recognized standards and related materials within the GHA Program.

GHA 3.0 has taken consumer feedback and GHA surveyor feedback to make this 3.0 edition more inclusive of various healthcare delivery settings. Specific changes from GHA Version 2.0 to GHA Version 3.0 include:

- Implemented use of “Parent” Standards to aid organizations in their understanding of the intent of a standard applicable to their organization.
- Reorganized sub-standards under logical parent standards.
- Re-organized core competencies (standard chapters) alphabetically for improved user experience
- Improved location and demographic language for user experience and versatility in how clients define GHA Services around the world in different markets.
- Eliminated previous standard, RM.4.2, due to inability to adequately enforce and score for compliance in different markets.
- Organized standards to show clearer applicability to client profiles and for surveyor analysis.
- Incorporated a new Ethics standard, ET.1.3, to address performing adequate background checks on any foreign or visiting clinical providers prior to hire or collaboration.
- Incorporated a new GHA standard, PM. 1.8, to address the development, implementation and monitoring of at least one clinical pathway for services offered to medical travel patients.
- Changed the name of the prior core competency Medical Assessment & Treatment (MA) to Clinical Assessment & Treatment (CA).
- Incorporated a new section on Medication Management in the Clinical Assessment & Treatment core competency to include one new standard, CA. 3.1.
- A new section focused on Healthcare Leadership was added to include standards focused in, 1) Competency & Performance, 2) Clinical Governance and 3) Business Acumen.
- A new section focused on Technology was added to include standards focused in, 1) Use of Technology & Appropriateness of Use for Operations, 2) Security, and 3) Patient Management.
- Included the use of the term Patient Navigator along with Patient Advocate.
- Incorporated a new Marketing Standard, MK. 5.4, to address the need to regularly incorporate medical travel or international patient services performance data into its marketing activities.
- Incorporated a new Risk Management Standard, RM. 3.6, to ensure organizations maintain an adverse incident reporting system specific to the vulnerabilities of GHA Services.
- Incorporated a new section on Patient Safety in the Quality Improvement core competency to include two new standards, QI.6.1 and QI.6.2.
- Incorporated Critical Success Factors as a requirement for certification. An organization will be required to achieve at least partial compliance on at least 8 of 10 Critical Success factors if not all 10 at the point and time of a accreditation site visit.
- In the interest of comprehension and client engagement, developed and incorporated a definition glossary for terms used throughout the manual.





The Value of Global Healthcare Accreditation

Accreditation by the Global Healthcare Accreditation Program benefits healthcare, wellness and tourism organizations, as well as patients and consumers by:

- Provides benchmarks and best practices to providers to continually assess and improve their performance.
- Empowers and protects patients and consumers to make informed choices about their care and to seek organizations which provide transparency, cultural sensitivity and patient engaged experiences.
- Design compliance strategies to manage risks and offer solutions impacting performance, while assuring ethical and transparent business practices.
- Achieve Competitive Edge in their Market
- Achieve Increased Visibility & Respect from Industry Stakeholders
- Validate Commitment to Excellence to Consumers
- Enhance Staff Competencies & Overall Service Capabilities
- Bring Increased Healthcare, Wellness and Tourism Business to the Local Community and Economy



Critical Success Factors

A Critical Success Factors (CSF) shall be define as a standard, concept or process that is critical and mandatory towards building or maintaining a sustainable and patient-centered international or medical travel patient services program or initiative. The specific CSFs identified for organizations to achieve GHA are the following GHA Standards:

- Clinical Assessment & Treatment 1.1
- Communication & Education 4.1
- Cultural Competency 1.1
- Ethics 2.1
- Infection Control & Waste Management 1.1
- Patient Advocacy 2.1
- Risk Management 3.6
- Transparency & Compliance 2.1
- Transparency & Compliance 3.1
- Travel & Tourism 1.1

Proving compliance with GHA CSFs does not guarantee compliance for accreditation.

CSFs shall be accepted using one of two following methods:

- 1) The first method would equate to an organization having partial compliance or full compliance with all 10 required CSFs.
- 2) The second method will allow for 8 of the 10 required CSFs to have partial or full compliance. Additionally, the remaining 2 CSFs without partial compliance or full compliance shall require a plan of action to be submitted to achieve accreditation.



The Medical Travel Cycle

The medical travel cycle represents the entire continuum of service and care for a medical travel or medical tourism consumer. Hospitality facilities and other healthcare settings may or may not recognize this particular cycle in their operations. However, in the context of Medical Travel or Medical Tourism, it is recognized, as a standard that should coincide with the service continuum a patient will experience within Medical Travel or Medical Tourism service channels. Five main stages are included in the hospitality service continuum as detailed in the diagram below.





Global Healthcare Accreditation Standards





Clinical Assessment & Treatment (CA)

Overview

Medical Travel or International patient assessment and screening is an objective evaluation or appraisal of an individual's health status, including acute and chronic conditions. The assessment gathers information through collection of medical history data, observation, and physical examination.

When dealing with Global Healthcare Accreditation, the GHA Program recognizes maintaining protocols related to medical assessment at the point of inquiry as well as at the point of admission to a facility, or with outpatient facilities their original appointment, are crucial in the management of the overall clinical outcome as well as the patient experience.

Delivering the proper medical, dental or other healthcare treatment to a patient, whether through the GHA program or an alternative admission channel into an organization, is an expectation of the GHA for accredited facilities. The GHA Program endorses the Agency for Health Care Research (AHRQ) definition of Quality, "As doing the right thing for the right patient, at the right time, in the right way to achieve the best possible results." Thus, it is an expectation of GHA Accredited facilities to maintain the necessary protocols to deliver the correct care to the correct patient when managing the clinical and individual needs of international or medical travel patients.

Standards

CA.1 Assessment and Treatment

CA.1.1 The organization maintains documented clinical protocols* or procedures that address medical or dental or other healthcare entity assessment, treatment and any other services being offered to international or medical travel patients.



CA.1.2 The organization maintains documented operational protocols* or procedures that address medical assessment, treatment and any other services being offered to international or medical travel patients.

CA1.3 The organization ensures individual needs are incorporated and documented at the point of assessment as it relates to the international or medical travel patient.

CA.2 Personnel and Training

CA.2.1 The organization ensures adequately trained personnel are providing medical, dental or other healthcare, assessment and treatment to patients.

CA.2.2 The organization regularly performs a review of all clinical protocols* or procedures related to patient assessment, treatment and discharge.

CA.3. Medication

CA.3.1 The organization ensures the need for medication education and medication management is properly communicated to patients.





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