

## **SOURCE: Health Options Worldwide**

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### **Domestic Medical Tourism Experts Health Options Worldwide Says Employers and Insurers Are Market Drivers for Medical Travel in 2011**

PRINCETON, NJ--(Marketwire - December 14, 2010) - When it comes to the [medical tourism](#) market, it is commonly thought that the patient is the one who determines the marketing environment. "In reality, prospective patients are only the second leading factor in the [medical travel](#) market," said David Goldstein, president of Health Options Worldwide (HOW), an online [medical travel website](#). "The main drivers are the plan owners, the entities that own the plan, pay the [healthcare costs](#) and honor the contract with their participants." Goldstein describes these entities as employers and government agencies for self-funded plans and insurance companies for fully funded plans, those who provide access to the participants in the plan.

"Employers provide access to employees, government agencies provide access to the government agency employees and insurance companies provide access to contracted participants," explained Goldstein, whose website connects patients with high-quality, low-cost physicians domestically and internationally.

"Now that we know who the drivers are, it's important that the medical tourism message is effectively delivered to them," continued Goldstein. "This is done via communication and marketing." Communication is the key to win over the plan owner, and marketing is the key to winning over the participants. It is important to highlight the most attractive features of [domestic medical travel](#) to make them consider the package worth their while, while assuring them that their participation will lead to a successful outcome.

According to new laws, in 2014, large employers must offer health coverage to every full time employee or face stiff penalties. These plans cannot have pre-existing condition exclusions and the waiting period should not be less than 90 days. However, small employers face no consequences for not providing health coverage to their employees. But if they do, tax credit incentives will be offered starting in 2010. "Our healthcare system is largely employer-based and a growing number of employers are shifting the costs onto workers by raising co-pays and deductibles," said Goldstein. "Therefore, there is no doubt that employers play a huge role in healthcare coverage decisions for employees."

According to Goldstein, the biggest oversight is when the employees don't have enough information to trust their health to medical tourism. "Employees don't understand that quality care can still be affordable just by traveling within the United States," said Goldstein. "Employers need to promote their medical travel programs and make their employees more aware about them."

With more and more employees traveling within the United States for cheaper and high quality healthcare, consumer awareness is vital to fuel the medical travel industry. "It doesn't matter how great or affordable the services are, if the consumers don't know they exist, those services will not be used," said Goldstein.