

# *IPS Germany Shares Medical Tourism Advice & Success Tips*

*Interview with Mr. Christian Fadi El-Khoury*

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A Publication of



# IPS Germany

## *Interview with Mr. Christian Fadi El-Khoury*



- **Interviewees Name:** Mr. Christian Fadi El-Khoury
- **Company Name:** IPS Germany
- **Company Location:** Germany
- **Business Type:** Medical Tourism Facilitator

Today we'll be interviewing IPS Germany, a German medical tourism agency who offers a unique concept that comprises the perfect organization of patient trips to Germany and supports their clients from start to end, and even beyond, when the client is back in their home country.

### **Gilliam Elliott's Interview with Christian Fadi El-Khoury**

**Can you introduce yourself to our readers and tell us a little about your background and what originally got you interested in medical travel?**

Answer: My father ran Germany's most impactful medical travel agency that cared for up to 2,000 international patients a year and this number only takes checkup patients into consideration. Since the company offered comprehensive services my father's mobile phone and sometimes even our private phone used to be called in the evening and after mid night with patient inquiries. As I grew older, I started to take on small tasks, answering phones when no one was present, making call notes and forwarding them. At some point I started giving consultations on the travel procedures and services. Safe to say I liked what I did and after I ran through multiple internships in the company I was fully emerged in the business. As I got a broader education during the course of studying law and reading up on financial and accounting topics, I started improving my father's company.

Instead of taking over the company from my father me and my older brother acquired an inactive project from him, revived and rebranded it to what we now know as IPS-Germany.

### **Does your company do outbound tourism, domestic tourism or inbound tourism to Germany?**

Answer: Our company does exclusively inbound medical tourism to Germany. However, if we are aware that there is a hospital suited for a case in a way that no German hospital is, we communicate this to the patient and help him/her as much as we can to access it. Until this day my father constantly preaches to me that the patient's interest must be our first consideration. And even if I would entrust German hospitals with most of the treatments imaginable, there are international providers who have proven to be the provider of choice for certain indications.

## **How does the cost and quality of care in Germany match up against other top medical tourism destinations?**

Answer: I would dare to say that Germany is unrivaled. In the recent years other destinations who offer great quality medical care at a lesser price have emerged, but there are multiple factors that put the German medical sector in front of most.

Beside the excellent quality and high level of innovative technologies and procedures you still have comparatively reasonable prices. Further the drugs and medication you are going to receive during your treatment in Germany are made by the original manufacturers and thus of the highest quality and potency.

Not everyone can just open a hospital in Germany. In order to do so there is a myriad of administrative and qualitative demands you have to fulfill, certificates to be gotten and standards to be kept. This guarantees a certain level of competence and diligence, wherever in Germany you get treated. This is not to say that all German hospitals offer the same quality treatment, but you can be sure that there is a high standard kept throughout all of them.

Lastly, back to pricing. German hospitals and doctors have to bill patients according to strict rules that only offer limited flexibility. There is no exception for international patients. So overcharging international patients is neither legal nor easily done.

## **What is your most popular medical tourism package?**

Answer: I never liked the idea of offering “medical tourism packages” and that is why we do not offer them. The reasoning behind them is quite simple.

First of all a “package” suggests that offered examinations are the same for every patient, but we offer an individual program for each patient, based on his individual information and situation. Further we do not advertise with prices as they also are subject to the individual needs. In my opinion they do not belong on a website, especially in Germany, where the same treatment can considerably vary in cost for two different patients due to their specific state and situation.

### **How do you choose what hospitals and clinics to add to your provider network?**

Answer: We do not have a set provider network. Granted there is hospitals that we work with more often than others but as we do not receive commissions from any of the hospitals or doctors there is no such thing as a set network. We offer those hospitals to our clients that offer the highest competency and have a proven track record when it comes to treating international patients.

### **You have a program that is unique to your company called the 3 pillars program. How does your 3 pillars program work?**

Answer: The three pillars represent the three stages of medical travel. There is a preparatory phase in which the initial work gets done. We aspire to answer all questions the patient has in that stage. We request cost estimations, present multiple treatment options and hospitals to them, take care of the visa process and arrange for their special needs.

The preparatory stage is followed by their actual presence in Germany. During that time we offer a wide variety of services to make the patient focus on the medical examination but not overthink his experience.

We manage to do so by offering efficient options for local tourism in order to maintain the focus on the treatment, while still giving them a way to enjoy their stay. The mental health aspect of medical tourism gets often overlooked and we do our best to foster a healthy environment for our guests.

What makes your medical tourism agency stand out among other agencies?

First and foremost: We do not charge any commissions by the provider where the patient ends up receiving his treatment. We charge the services rendered to the patient to offer full transparency and independence from the provider.

Consulting both, patients and hospitals gives us great insight into the workings of the two sides and makes it possible for us to create smooth interfaces between them. I can use the feedback I get from the patients to improve the providers and the feedback from the hospitals to improve our processes in order to offer better service and solutions to our clients.

However, due to ethical reasons, we never offer hospitals that we are currently consulting in, to our patients and vice versa. (With the exception being cases in which the hospital actually is the most qualified option) We emphasize ethics and legal aspects in our work as Germany's medical tourism industry is mostly unregulated. This is in no way detrimental to the industry, I do not even think it has had a negative impact, but there are still a number of bad players who do not work in the patient's interest. Focusing on legally and morally sound services end up in a better patient experience.

## **Do you only work with individual patients or do you coordinate medical trips for corporations as well?**

Answer: We also work with companies. The services are mostly the same, because even though we might be in a contractual relationship with the company, we still serve the patient's interest.

As corporate clients have a higher demand when it comes to foresight and planning, we give them the option to schedule checkups up to 1 year in advance (sometimes even more). We also help them gather a team of German doctors that will fly out to their offices and conduct the checkups in their facilities to minimize the impact annual checkups have on their work flow and agendas.

## **How do you pre-screen patients before their medical trip? What's the process?**

Answer: We have the patients provide us with all information that pertains to their case. We also have them write a brief on their symptoms and how they experience them. This gives us the chance to tailor the experience closer to their needs. In specific cases we send out sheets or forms, but mostly questions that the treating doctor has sent us after reviewing the initial inquiry.

## **What attracts international patients to Germany?**

Answer: The biggest attraction is the high-end medical treatment they can receive in Germany. Germany has a reputation for quality, be it in the manufacturing industries or sciences. A lot of our clients from the MENA region appreciate the parks and recreational offers as well as the weather. You can walk around for hours outside, enjoy green landscapes and a great infrastructure. This improves the quality of their stay and they have come to love it.

## **When and how do your clients pay for their treatment abroad?**

Answer: If we are not familiar with the patient, or if he doesn't come recommended by a client we have worked with already (there is families that we have cared for in three generations now), we usually charge them upfront for our services. This actually serves the purpose to filter the requests who are serious about coming to Germany and those who just want to get a quote from a German hospital. While most other companies do not charge for the preparatory stage we do as we want to maintain the high quality and standard that we promise. It is not unusual to spend over 12h working on a case file only to get a quote from the hospital because there is more to it than sharing the information. We conduct screenings on the request, have an external medical board review it and other steps most companies do not implement. That way we can also keep unserious requests from the hospitals because it spares them the processes they would have to go through.

## **What is your long-term vision for IPS Germany?**

Answer: I aim to make the IPS Germany a platform for medical tourism in Germany. And by platform, I mean a place to discuss this industry, exchange ideas and formulate common goals. I am a firm believer in dialogue being the best way to improve the industry in a way that benefits the patient while still making it an attractive industry for the stakeholders.

Looking for ways to grow your organization? Contact me today and let's talk about what is possible.

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