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SHARIAH- COMPLIANT MEDICAL TOURISM: AN EVALUATION OF THE LEGAL IMPEDIMENTS OF ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract	Malaysia is one of the first countries in the world to introduce the halal standards MS1500: 2004 in its vision to become the global halal hub. With the inception of halal standards in 2004, the practical guidelines for the food industry on the production, preparation, handling and storage of halal food are now available in a more structured and convenient form. With the advancement of technology in today's world, the focus of halal standards is no longer confined to the food industry. The initiative to introduce halal standards has now been extended to include other industries such as cosmetics, finance, fashion and healthcare. In the healthcare industry, the demand for halal products is accelerating, thanks to the growing awareness of Muslims on the obligation to consume and use halal products. The healthcare industry too has a major potential for demand since the products are also consumable, specifically pharmaceutical products such as medicines and vaccines. Nonetheless, there are legal challenges that pose impediments to further promoting shariah-compliant medical tourism in Malaysia. This study which is doctrinal in nature, analyses the existing legal framework of the healthcare system and medical tourism in Malaysia. Despite the promising demand for halal medical products, there are challenges in promoting this special segment of the industry to everyone. Uncertainty regarding the correct term to portray Islamic medical tourism, various versions of shariah-compliant medical tourism, lack of standardisation of shariah principles, the inadequacy of legal regulatory framework, and the proliferation of international halal certification bodies, will subsequently impede the growth of shariah-compliant medical tourism in Malaysia. The study attempts to discuss these aspects and provides some suggestions to promote shariah-compliant medical tourism globally.		
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