

How to Evaluate Your Overseas Healthcare Provider

Traditionally, patients are referred to specialists and hospitals by a trusted family doctor. When you seek healthcare outside your country this may not be the case; more likely, you will be the one choosing a medical specialist you do not know, at a hospital you have never visited. Below are questions we recommend you ask of any hospital you are considering and the relevant answers for Bumrungrad International's hospital in Bangkok, Thailand

Is the hospital accredited by a reputable third-party organization?

If a hospital is serious about quality and safety, it seeks independent measurement and confirmation. Bumrungrad was the first Asian hospital accredited by the Joint Commission International (JCI), the international arm of the organization that reviews and accredits American hospitals. Their checklist includes over 350 standards, for everything from surgical hygiene and anesthesia procedures to the systems in place to credential medical staff and nurses. JCI sends a team to re-review accredited hospitals at 3-year intervals. Bumrungrad was first accredited in 2002 and re-accredited in 2005.

Thailand also has its own Hospital Accreditation (HA) program conducted by the Institute of Hospital Quality Improvement & Accreditation. Bumrungrad was the first hospital in the country to be accredited by this program in 1999 and was re-accredited in triennial reviews in 2002 and 2005. The Thai accreditation process is demanding: Bumrungrad is one of only 14 private hospitals in Bangkok (out of over 100) to earn it.

Have these organizations ever taken any disciplinary actions against the hospital?

Neither accrediting organization has ever taken any disciplinary action against Bumrungrad. Both JCI and the Thai Hospital Accreditation Authority have procedures in place to deal with complaints and concerns received from patients concerning their accredited hospitals. When requested, Bumrungrad has always provided all requested information to the independent reviewers in such cases. The hospital has met all requirements and has never been disciplined or had its accreditation withdrawn or restricted in any way by either accrediting organization.

How are the hospital's doctors licensed and credentialed?

All Bumrungrad physicians are fully licensed by the Thai Medical Council to practice their specialty in Thailand. In addition, many are Board Certified in their specialty in the US, Australia, or Europe. Bumrungrad's credentialing process requires a formal review of each doctor's qualifications and track record by the Credentials and Bylaws Committee and the Hospital's Medical Executive Committee. These reviews take place before a doctor is appointed to the medical staff by the Hospital's Board of Governors and then again every three years thereafter.

A summary of each of our physician's qualifications is available on our website. If you would like to review the qualifications or specific experience of your physician in more detail when you arrive we can arrange for you to do so. Also, our International Medical Coordination Office (7 doctors and 12 nurses on our administrative staff) can address questions or concerns you may have regarding your procedure before you make the decision to schedule your visit.

What training and licensing do the hospital's nurses, pharmacists, imaging and lab technicians receive?

Nurses, pharmacists, imaging and lab technicians must undergo schooling and pass certification exams to obtain licenses to practice in Thailand. Nurses are re-certified at 5-year intervals. Those with special responsibilities (such as ICU nurses) must receive special training and be certified as competent in those areas. Bumrungrad nurses also receive special English language training and ongoing continuing education covering a wide range of patient safety issues.

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How much experience does the hospital have in treating international patients? What facilities does the hospital have in place specifically for international patients?

Bumrungrad treats over 1,000 patients from outside Thailand every day (over 400,000 per year) from 190 different countries. We know of no other hospital in the world that treats more international patients than Bumrungrad currently treats. Facilities we have in place specifically for international patients include:

- **International Medical Coordination Office:** 7 doctors and 12 nurses on our administrative staff who coordinate scheduling of procedures, attendant family logistical questions during treatment, and follow-up care planning.
- **International Referral Offices:** 17 offices in countries outside Thailand which specialize in arranging appointments and making travel arrangements for Bumrungrad patients.
- **International Referral Center:** 16 specially trained staff who respond to between 500 - 1,000 medical inquiry e-mails every day.
- **International Interpreter Services:** 58 interpreters covering virtually all languages spoken by our patients. For those few patients whose languages are not covered we make special communication arrangements.
- **International Travel and Visa Services:** A unique relationship with Thailand's largest ground services travel company to arrange any travel needs for patients and families while in Thailand. The Thai Home Ministry operates a visa extension service at Bumrungrad once a week to process any needed visa extensions for patients and their families.
- **International Hotels on Campus:** Two hotels (one connected to the hospital by a link bridge) are operated by Bumrungrad specifically for international patients. These hotels are offered to Bumrungrad's international patients at favorably competitive rates to comparable hotels in the area.

How does the hospital prevent potentially-dangerous drug interactions?

Bumrungrad uses software currently updated four times a year with an international drug database (First Data Bank), to check for potentially harmful drug interactions.

How are a patient's rights to competent medical treatment protected?

All patients in Thailand are protected by Thai law, codes of medical conduct, and a Patient Bill of Rights enforced by the Kingdom's Medical Council (you may ask the hospital for a copy). Patients may complain directly to the Thai Medical Council, or the Ministry of Public Health. These organizations have the power to enforce remedies because they grant licenses to hospitals and their doctors. You may also complain to the Thai Consumer Protection Agency or the police, or take legal action in a Thai court.

When considering any overseas treatment it is important to understand that any legal disputes (either medical care or commercial) concerning your care will be decided in the country of treatment, not your country of origin or citizenship.

What measures does the hospital take to ensure patient safety?

Bumrungrad considers the quality of patient care, patient safety, and continuous improvement to be at the core of our mission. We follow patient safety practices outlined by the standards of our accrediting organizations (JCI and Thai HA). Our facility was built to comply with US hospital (NFPA) building and fire safety standards. Medical care is continuously monitored by both hospital and medical staff committees and the hospital continuously tracks over 500 patient safety and clinical quality measures. Our dedicated team vigorously reviews every concern raised by patients, doctors, administrators, and hospital quality organizations with regular reports of their findings to the hospital's management team, medical staff, and Board of Governors.