

# Travel the world and come back a new man

Feeling your age? Worried about the future of the NHS?  
DICK LUMSDEN has a radical suggestion

I had an epiphany this month! It was cold, dark and miserable outside and I had woken up suffering more than the usual amounts of aches and pains.

What would I have given to be young, healthy and fit again and to be able to enjoy some warm sunshine instead of this apparently unending new ice age?

And then it struck me. Why not combine the two? Head for the sun and come back with an all-over tan and minus the aches and pains – medical tourism is the way forward!

Apparently, in 2009, more than 60,000 of us left the UK to visit destinations around the globe for procedures as diverse as teeth whitening and gastric band fitting. Despite the recession, that number continued to rise last year and my prediction is that we are set to see a major explosion in numbers.

Why? Because the Coalition Government is about to introduce some wide-ranging reforms to the NHS at the same time as the numbers of people who are the biggest users of the NHS (us oldies) are increasing by thousands every day.

Call me cynical, but a major shake-up of the NHS, dismantling Primary Care Trusts and putting more and more bureaucratic responsibility on the GPs, is only going to end one way with longer queues, less efficiency, and those who can afford it turning to private health care.

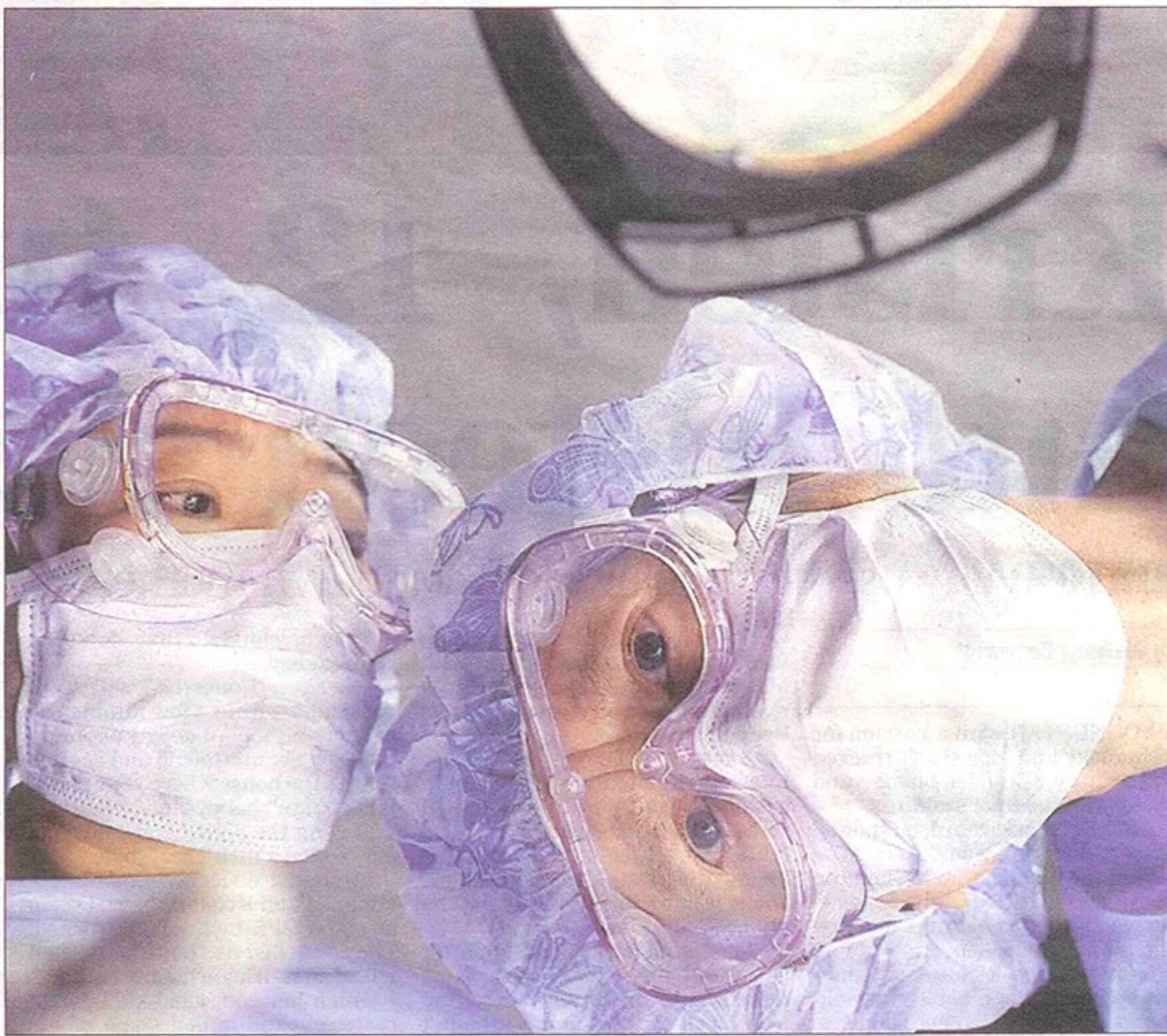
Now there are two things wrong with that. Firstly, if you have something wrong with you – whether it is a bunion or the first showings of a major disease – you want it fixed as quickly as possible.

And if you don't want to wait, but can't afford the price tag, what can you do?

And the answer of course is combine your holidays with your treatment in one of the world's fast growing health tourism locations and get more bang for your buck!

Treatment in India is only 10 per cent of the cost of most western countries. Cuba is fast becoming a hot-spot for joint replacement and there are queues of Americans crossing over into Mexico every day to take advantage of cheap dental work.

Wherever you look around the world, there are medical staff awaiting your arrival and cocktail waiters tucked right in



WISH YOU WERE HERE? Health tourism is on the increase

couple of years ago, I am now a semi-regular in the surgery.

I've been told that sometime soon I will need a knee replacement. Plus, I wake up every night in agony lying on the opposite side... I'm convinced I have a hip on the slippery slope. My eyesight is fading and the thought of laser surgery is tempting and sooner or later I'll have to do something about my teeth.

So I've decided that, instead of retiring and going on the grand tour, I'm going to go on the medical tour first and then retire in comfort with a good book.

It's all in the planning though. I have a friend (you know who you are...) who has an extended family scattered all over the world and he has a "holiday spread sheet" which has enough birthdays, weddings and Christmas get-togethers to use up every day of his holiday from now until 2014.

and I to the island paradise of Costa Rica and the Hospital Clinica Biblica.

There, while she suns herself under the palms, for £9,000 all in I will have a partial knee replacement, followed by intensive physiotherapy, post operative rest and relaxation and maybe a gentle walk along the beach before it's all over.

From there, we'll jet across to Mexico and a week of extensive dental work, straightening and whitening with a tour of the tequila distillery and a few days exploring the Aztec trail.

Like most people I could do with dropping a few pounds round the middle. So from Mexico, flashing my new pearly whites at the aircrew, and without the need of crutches, it's back on the plane and onwards to China.

In Shanghai, I can get a cut-price abdominoplasty (to re-shape my abdomen) and then head out to

6,000 restaurants offering cooked viper, cobra and sea-snake.

But then, refreshed, we'll continue our world tour heading for India and corrective eye surgery at a tenth of the UK prices, staying awhile to rest my eyes in Chennai, before heading finally for Poland and a replacement left hip in Krakow – allowing ourselves time to limp through the obligatory tour of the nearby world famous (?) Wieliczka salt mine.

By the end, I may well have spent my son's inheritance but when I arrive back in the UK I'll be able to walk tall, see straight, smile confidently and fit into my trousers again. Happy days!

■ Dick Lumsden is Managing Director of Owl Marketing Solutions, one of the few companies specialising in marketing and advertising to the 50+ group. If you have any views on this article, or are