

Thailand's Medical Tourism Hits a Record Year

What hospital groups need beyond English-speaking staff - a localization strategy for the world's fastest-growing healthcare destination.

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A Record-Breaking Year for Thai Healthcare

32.9M

International Arrivals

Recorded in Thailand in 2025, a historic high

€41.3B

Tourism Revenue

Generated by international visitors, per the Tourism Authority of Thailand

10M+

Long-Haul Arrivals

Surpassed for the first time, signaling a more diverse patient population

This surge brings patients from markets with vastly different languages, expectations, and cultural backgrounds, raising a critical question for hospital groups: is English-speaking staff enough?



English Gets You in the Room. Culture Keeps You There.

English proficiency enables basic exchange, but healthcare communication goes far deeper. Patients need to **understand** what is happening, feel comfortable asking questions, correctly interpret the tone of medical information, and navigate a journey that feels familiar and respectful.

- ❑ Linguistic accuracy gets patients through the conversation. Cultural adaptation helps them feel understood throughout the entire experience.

Why English Proficiency Alone Falls Short

Research on international healthcare in Bangkok found that **communication received the lowest satisfaction rating** among all service factors, even in facilities with English-speaking staff. The friction isn't always vocabulary. It runs deeper.

Tone

A direct physician statement may sound reassuring in one culture and blunt or alarming in another.

Hierarchy

Some patients hesitate to question a doctor, perceiving them as an authority not to be challenged.

Decision-Making

Expectations around individual vs. family involvement in healthcare choices vary significantly by culture.

Sensitivity

Topics like reproductive, mental, or sexual health require culturally careful, precise wording.

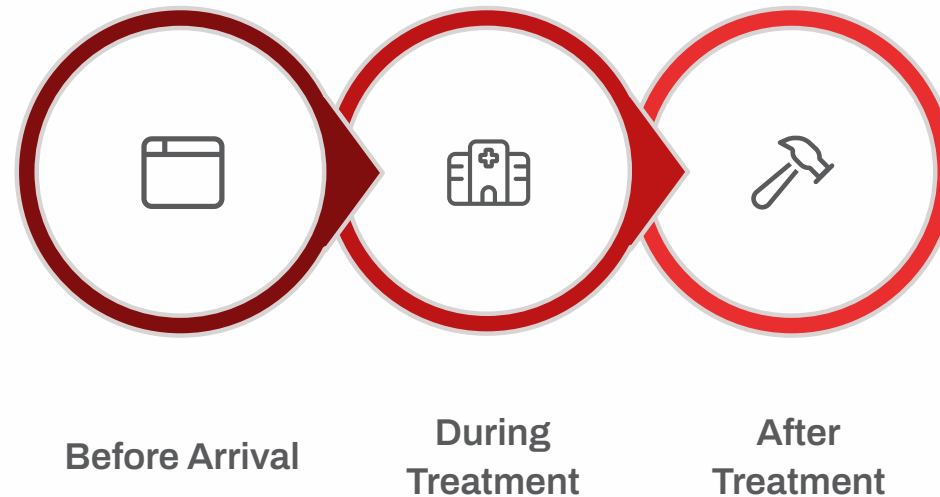
The Right Questions to Ask

A truly multilingual strategy goes well beyond "Can someone speak English?" Hospital groups should challenge themselves with a more demanding set of questions.

- Does the patient understand the information?
- Does the communication style feel culturally appropriate?
- Are translated materials medically accurate and culturally natural?
- Can patients navigate billing, insurance and aftercare in their language?
- Is staff trained to recognize cultural differences that affect communication?

Localization Across the Entire Patient Journey

The patient journey begins weeks before arrival and every stage is an opportunity for communication to either build confidence or introduce uncertainty.

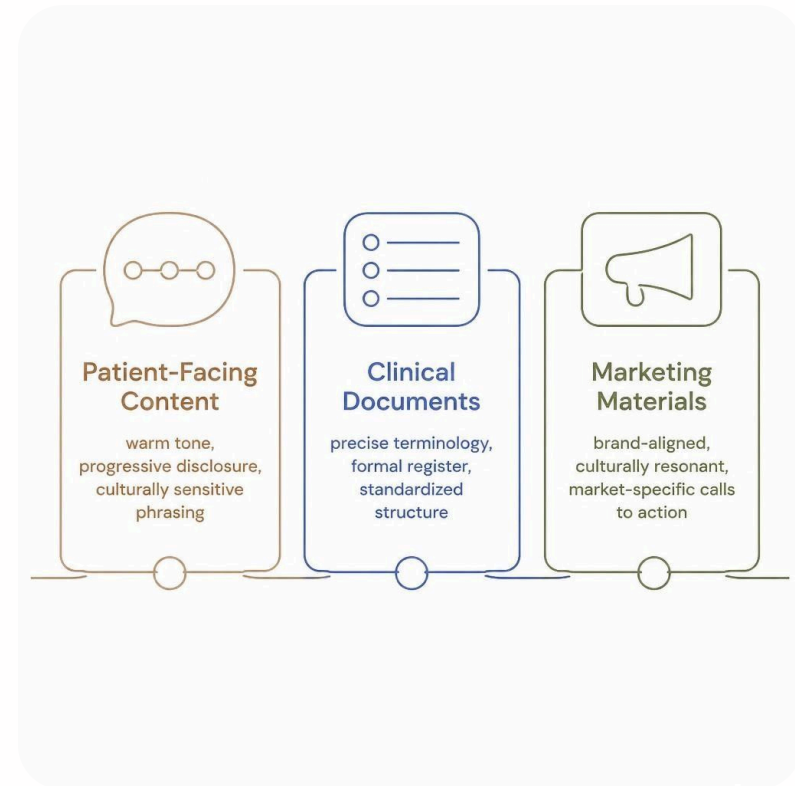


Each touchpoint must be localized, not just translated, to reflect the cultural expectations of each target market.

Adapt Communication Style, Not Just Words

A word-for-word medical translation may be technically correct yet still feel unfamiliar or inappropriate. True localization considers:

- Formality, politeness and sentence structure
- How risks and benefits are framed
- Whether information should be presented directly or progressively
- Culturally appropriate calls to action and reassurance
- Tone differences between patient-facing and clinical documents



How Leading Thai Hospitals Are Doing It

Bangkok Hospital

Dedicated Arabic and Japanese services covering interpretation, appointments, dietary preferences and religious considerations.

Samitivej Hospital

Interpreters in Japanese, Korean, Burmese, Chinese, Arabic and Indonesian, language support embedded in the care model.

Bumrungrad International

100+ interpreters, a Medical Coordination Office, and international referral offices in multiple countries for end-to-end patient management.





Move from Translation to True Localization

Thailand's international healthcare market is becoming more diverse and more demanding. The hospitals that succeed will be those that treat website content, patient forms, interpreter support, and international marketing as connected parts of the same brand experience.

Contact 1-StopAsia to strengthen your hospital's localization strategy and create a more culturally informed experience for international patients.

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