

## From the Tundra to the Tropics for Treatment



An avid mountaineer, 50-year-old Sangeet Kaur Khalsa had constant pain in her knee. A surgeon she saw in California suspected a meniscal tear, but she postponed further investigation after learning that the required MRI scan would cost her US\$2,500. “I was just not prepared to pay so much for that,” Khalsa recalls. “Back home in Alaska, it was even higher, around US\$3,700. I sank into despair, not knowing where I could get good treatment and afford it.”

Searching for options abroad, she came across the Web site of Overseas Medical Services, Canada, Inc. and spoke with Ms. Aruna Th-Hollingshead, who assisted her all the way through the process. She admits, “I was a little skeptical at first, but then Aruna called and said she had found a doctor for me at Singapore’s National University Hospital.”

In addition to making Khalsa’s travel arrangements, Aruna provided information about the hospital and the doctor who would treat her. There was, however, a little problem. Most countries will not issue a visa to travelers whose passports have less than six months left before expiry — and Khalsa’s passport was expiring in four.

Aruna relates, “The people at NUH sorted out her visa with the immigration department in no time. They clearly took pains to make things easier. This is important for patients like Khalsa, because they have to endure their physical pain on top of the disappointment of their healthcare system. They don’t need further headaches.”

In May 2007, Khalsa arrived at Changi International Airport, breezed through immigration, and was brought by NUH staff to the hospital, where she found welcoming orchids in her room. Dr. James Hui Hoi Po, associate professor and senior consultant in the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, met with Khalsa to outline the diagnostic and treatment plan.

The next day, the long-awaited MRI scan (which only cost about US\$500) confirmed that a meniscal tear was the source of the pain. To solve the problem, Dr. Hui trimmed Khalsa’s meniscus and smoothed the inside of the kneecap. The 45-minute procedure proceeded without any complications.

Within a few days after her surgery, Khalsa was a common sight scooting around the hospital and was looking forward to scaling the mountains back home again. She reports, “Dr. Hui and the other doctors took pains to explain things and kept me informed of everything. The nurses spoilt me. The healthcare system as a whole is really remarkable.”