

THE BEST HOSPITALS

AN INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

GETTING MEDICAL TREATMENT IN FRANCE

**SEVEN MAJOR MEDICAL SPECIALITIES
AND HOSPITALS READY TO WELCOME YOU**

EDITORIAL

The quality of care and the tradition of welcoming in France are well known. For the first time, French Healthcare is presented in a booklet for patients around the world.

France is a land of medical innovation. Our teams of doctors, surgeons and researchers, trained at the highest level, are used to world firsts in many therapeutic areas. In order to help international patients benefit from their expertise, French hospitals set new standards for people who choose to travel for care.

One of the priorities of the association **French Healthcare** (<https://frenchhealthcare.fr>), which brings together institutions and health professionals wishing to promote French know-how abroad, is to propose a framework guaranteeing the satisfaction of patients and the quality of care throughout their stay.

The objectives of this approach include easier access to “French” care, obtaining visas for health reasons, optimal reception in institutions for patients and their families, customized services, and specially trained staff.

Patients who do not have the health care provision in their country of residence will now be able to find in France the best treatments and medical care, in terms of efficiency, cost and quality of reception. Thousand and one treasures of French cities and territories also await them.

JEAN-FRANÇOIS GENDRON
President of the French Healthcare association



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HEALTHCARE IN FRANCE

RENOWNED HEALTHCARE

With an internationally recognized healthcare system, groundbreaking research facilities and high-quality infrastructures, France welcomes many patients from around the globe.

Its medical teams are ranked among the best in the world. French excellence extends to numerous surgical and medical specialities, notably for the treatment of cancers, heart diseases, orthopaedic surgery and reconstructive surgery.

A GUARANTEE OF FASTER TREATMENT MEETING THE HIGHEST STANDARDS IN ALL FIELDS

The French healthcare system often receives top honours in international rankings: it is first on the World Health Organization's ranking of the world's health systems. This recognized performance ensures that patients receive treatment quickly with average wait times that earned France third place on the Commonwealth Fund 2014 ranking. It also means uninsured patients who are not French residents are able to benefit from very competitive prices.

A CULTURE OF INNOVATION FOR CUTTING-EDGE HEALTHCARE

Research by French medical research teams has won 13 Nobel Prizes, with awards received as

recently as 2008 (Professors Françoise Barré-Sinoussi and Luc Montagnier: discovery of the retrovirus responsible for causing AIDS) and 2011 (Professor Jules Hoffmann: research on innate immunity). French research is especially active in the fight against cancer and the treatment of rare diseases.

France strives to ensure effective transfer of technological and scientific advances to therapeutic fields, and several training centres for new techniques have been created, including IRCAD, the European School of Surgery (EEC) and Cancer Campus. These institutions were founded on the principles of translational medicine to speed patients access to the latest discoveries and improve the overall healthcare system performance.

HEALTH ESTABLISHMENTS OPEN TO THE WORLD

Our hospitals employ doctors, researchers and students from around the world. They have come to learn about French medical expertise through the best research and training programmes and help spread that knowledge across the globe.

Numerous techniques and surgical specialities, such as heart surgery, neurosurgery and robotic surgery, were developed in France and many – including the fields of gynaecology and oncology – owe much to French teams.

« 13 Nobel Prizes for medicine awarded to French teams



« A high-quality and safe certification system that is among the most stringent in the world

CERTIFIED QUALITY WITH THE HIGHEST OF STANDARDS

France has a quality control system, overseen by its National Health Authority (HAS), which is among the best in the world. French healthcare facilities are required to undergo certification every four years to ensure their quality level meets basic criteria regarding infection risk, patient identification, pain management, medication management and policies to improve care quality and safety. These are some of the most stringent certification standards in the world.

A HEALTHCARE SYSTEM THAT CONSIDERS ETHICS AND CONDUCT AS CORE VALUES

Practising medicine in France is governed by a medical conduct code that covers such principles as the respect of human dignity and professional confidentiality, patients' right to information and the obligation to obtain consent for all interventions. The equally high-quality therapeutic offer, available to all without distinction and subject to strict oversight, has earned French healthcare facilities one of the best reputations for probity in the world.

Article 7 of the Code of Conduct stipulates that "doctors must listen, examine, advise or offer care of the same standard to all patients regardless of their origin, nationality, religion or feelings they may have towards them."



Clinique Claude Bernard, Ermont



PRACTICAL INFORMATION



ACCESS

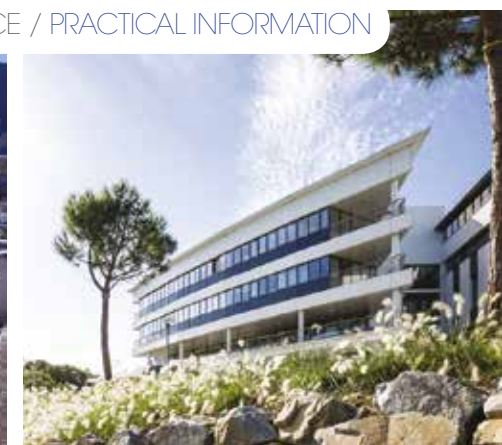
With its two international airports, Paris is a main entry point to France for many foreign visitors. It is well connected to all of the country's major cities by air and train.

- **38 international airports in France**, two of which are in Paris; high-speed trains (TGV) available from Roissy Charles-de-Gaulle Airport to all major cities in France.
- **All means of transport** are available for getting around Paris and the surrounding metropolitan area (Île-de-France): train, RER, metro, tramway, bus and taxi. Connection is also available to all major French cities via high-speed train (TGV), domestic flights and main motorways.

ACCOMMODATION

France has a considerable offer of hotels of all categories in all of its cities and near to hospital facilities. It is also possible to find furnished apartments for longer stays. All cities make hotel and booking information available through their tourist offices. In Paris, there are more than forty booking centres.

+ INFO WWW.FRANCE.FR



Left to right : CHU d'Amiens – Centre Antoine Lacassagne, Centre de lutte contre le cancer de Nice – Institut de Cancérologie de l'Ouest, Nantes

SHORT STAY VISA (SCHENGEN VISA) FOR MEDICAL REASONS

To receive medical treatment in France, it may be necessary (depending on your nationality) to obtain a short stay visa for medical reasons.

Who must obtain a visa?

A visa is not required for European Union citizens. The European Union has also waived the visa requirement for citizens of certain countries (such as the United States and the United Arab Emirates) if the length of stay(s) does not exceed 90 days in a 180-day period. Other nationalities are however subject to short-stay visas, for example : Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Cameroon, China, Ivory Coast, Egypt, Gabon, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Niger, Russia, Senegal and Tunisia.

How do you obtain a visa?

Visa requests must be made to the competent French consulate in the visitor's home country.

How long does the process take?

A response to a visa request is usually made within two to ten days. In the event of a proven medical emergency, the competent French consulate can expedite processing.

Is this visa different than a tourist visa?

Like a tourist visa, a visa for medical reasons is a short term visa (also known as a Schengen Visa) which is valid for 90 days over a 180-day period. It can take into account the patient's specific situation, and therefore a tourist visa cannot serve as a substitute.

What documents must be submitted with the request?

You will need to submit all basic documentation required for any short stay visa as well as specific documentation pertaining to your medical situation, which will be handled with absolute confidentiality.

The following basic documentation is required for all short stay visas:

- ★ Proof of accommodation in France
- ★ Proof of travel and repatriation insurance
- ★ Proof of sufficient personal finances to cover daily expenses while in France (payslips, bank statements, etc.)
- ★ If applicable, documentation for minors (birth certificate, parental authorization if the minor is traveling without his or her parents)

Other documentation specific to your situation may be requested, such as:

- ★ Written confirmation from the French healthcare facility that it will be admitting the patient, with the dates and duration of the planned hospital stay and an estimate of the cost of care;
- ★ A letter from a credible and trustworthy health insurance organization (in the event of a reciprocal social security agreement between the home country and France: prior approval by the health insurance company in the home country to cover the cost of care) or proof that medical fees have been paid for in advance;

- ★ If applicable, proof of registration on the national organ and cornea transplant list provided by the medical/surgical team that will be performing the transplant.

Is it mandatory to appear in person at the consulate to make the request?

Yes, unless the traveller's health prevents doing so.

What procedure should be followed for those accompanying the patient on the trip?

In addition to the documentation required for a Schengen Visa, specific documentation may be requested, including:

- ★ Proof of a family relationship with the patient, or if no family ties exist, a letter from the visa applicant justifying the reason for coming
- ★ Proof that costs related to the applicant will be covered by the organization covering the patient's medical costs.

It is possible to extend the visa?

An extension may be accorded on a case-by-case basis in the event that the patient's condition requires it. A certificate of health from the healthcare facility or the attending physician must be provided. All administrative procedures must be handled at the competent prefecture in France.

For more information, contact the French Consulate and relevant healthcare establishments (see the "Specialities" section of this brochure for contact information).

CARDIOLOGIE

AT THE FOREFRONT OF MEDICAL PROGRESS
AND TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS

26 MILLION
PEOPLE SUFFER FROM HEART FAILURE
AROUND THE WORLD, WITH 15 MILLION
IN EUROPE.

IN FOCUS

A EUROPEAN FIRST 3D IMAGING USED TO REPAIR HEARTS IN YOUNG PATIENTS

The CHU de Toulouse teaching hospital carried out three procedures in November 2015 to repair congenital heart defects in paediatric patients using a 3D imaging tool, a first in Europe.

The hospital in Toulouse is the only paediatric cardiology centre equipped with the EchoNavigator, a tool that enables heart surgeons to combine ultrasound and X-ray images to guide their movements during heart repairs.

Cardiology is one of the fields of medicine that has made the greatest strides in recent decades. Advances in research and technology mean that varied, effective and less invasive treatments are available or will soon be for most heart diseases.

To offer cutting-edge healthcare to their patients, French establishments are equipped with ultra-modern technological facilities and employ the latest in medical advances. They make use of the best techniques in interventional cardiology (intervention on the coronary arteries using X-ray visualization, without the need for surgery) and have developed several promising technological innovations for a range of heart diseases: the Carmat artificial heart, bioresorbable stents and leadless pacemakers, among others.

Remote cardiac services are also becoming more widespread in France, with such activities as echocardiogram interpretation and remote monitoring of patients' implanted medical devices (defibrillator) and heart rhythms.



TESTIMONIAL

DR ROMAIN CADOT
Director of Cardiology, Hôpital Saint-Joseph (Paris)

Interventional cardiology comprises coronary cardiology (dilated cardiomyopathy), structural cardiology (non-surgical treatment of heart valves) and electrophysiology (implantation of pacemakers and defibrillators and ablation of cardiac arrhythmias). French teams are pioneers in the field of coronary medicine – the first coronary stent in the world was implanted in France – and maintain a high level of technical expertise with extremely experienced specialists. These specialists are able to offer very complex non-surgical techniques to patients that can lead to shorter hospitalization times and faster recovery. Care is always thoroughly planned out and tailored to every patient.

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GYNAECOLOGY – OBSTETRICS

WELLBEING FOR WOMEN
AND THEIR CHILDREN

23,000
BIRTHS THROUGH ASSISTED
REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY (ART)
EVERY YEAR IN FRANCE.*

IN FOCUS

SOON TO COME: BIRTHS FOLLOWING UTERUS TRANSPLANTS IN FRANCE

Since November 2015, uterine transplantation for pregnancy is possible in France in the context of clinical research. For the time being, two hospitals have been authorized to test it by the ANSM*: the Limoges University Hospital (deceased donor collection) and the Foch hospital (live donor). With this green light, women born without a uterus or who have had a hysterectomy (removal of the uterus) for a benign pathology, can give birth to a child. In September 2017, the 1st Congress of the International Society of Transplantation (ISUT) identified 38 uterine transplants performed around the world. In December 2017 in Brazil, for the first time, a woman gave birth to a child after receiving a uterus from a deceased patient.

Lifetime health for women is an essential consideration in France.

For the field of gynaecology, which treats women regardless of their age and for all reproductive system diseases, French healthcare facilities have consultation units, emergency gynaecological services, and surgical, oncological and medical gynaecological units.

For the field of obstetrics, a speciality focused on pregnant women and their unborn child, France has numerous cutting-edge maternity hospitals throughout the country. These establishments have labour wards (delivery rooms and obstetric surgery ward) and nurseries, emergency obstetric services, high-risk pregnancy services, neonatal screening services and prenatal/foetal diagnosis units. During delivery, neonatal and maternal resuscitation services are available to handle any complications that may arise for mother and baby.

Moreover, each French region has several establishments that are authorized to practise clinically or biologically assisted reproduction.

*Source: Agence de la biomédecine

*National Agency for the Safety of Medicines and Health Products



TESTIMONIAL

PR JEAN-MARC AYOUBI

Director of Gynaecology-Obstetrics, Hôpital Foch (Paris)

France is renowned for its high-quality healthcare and for the excellence of its surgical gynaecology, obstetrics and reproductive medicine teams.

The experience and organization of these divisions ensure excellent treatment for couples dealing with infertility, mothers-to-be and their babies while also providing high-level surgical gynaecology services.

Performance, technology and quality services are possible not only because of this expertise but from medical and nursing teams' willingness to listen, provide assistance and offer attentive care.

+ ESTABLISHMENTS

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NEUROLOGY

A RANGE OF DISEASES,
SPECIFIC TREATMENT APPROACHES



26 MILLION
PEOPLE IN THE WORLD
SUFFER FROM EPILEPSY WHILE
24 MILLION SUFFER FROM
ALZHEIMER'S AND DEMENTIA.*

Neurology is a speciality field that treats diseases of the nervous system. Neurological problems, which range from headaches to epilepsy, Alzheimer's disease and strokes, affect nearly a billion people around the world.

Neurology units in France are comprised of neurological doctors and neurosurgeons with considerable experience. They treat:

- › strokes and transient ischemic attacks (TIA)
- › degenerative diseases: Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, etc.
- › epilepsy, multiple sclerosis (MS) and vasculitis
- › brain tumours
- › diseases of the peripheral nervous system (polyneuropathy, sciatic nerve pain) and muscular diseases
- › migraines and headaches

In addition to neurosurgeons, these hospital divisions also include nerve paralysis and imaging specialists.

The complex nature of neurology has led to very specific treatment approaches (sub-specialities, highly technical treatment, innovations, renowned centres) based on each major disease group.

IN FOCUS

PARKINSON'S DISEASE FRANCE LEADING THE WAY IN RESEARCH

Between 2009 and 2013, a joint French and English research team led a gene therapy clinical trial for patients suffering from severe Parkinson's disease. Fifteen patients received this new treatment, which involved the injection of a vector expressing the genes of three enzymes essential to biosynthesis of dopamine, which is lacking in patients with Parkinson's disease. This therapy has helped certain brain cells begin making and secreting dopamine once again. In all patients, motor symptoms stemming from the disease were improved up to 12 months after the treatment. The trial was coordinated by Professor Stéphane Palfi, Director of Neurosurgery at the Hôpital Henri-Mondor (AP-HP) in Paris.

*Source: OMS



TESTIMONIAL

PR STEPHAN CHABARDES

Neurosurgery clinic, Hôpital Michallon, CHU de Grenoble

France has a long tradition of excellence in the fields of neurology and neurosurgery. Numerous therapeutic innovations have been launched and developed in France, such as deep brain stimulation to treat Parkinson's disease and other movement disorders, epilepsy surgery and treatments for vascular malformations and brain tumours. For the most part, the teams work in teaching hospitals with the most modern of resources at their disposal. Their extensive expertise means they are able to safely treat both adult and young patients.



+ ESTABLISHMENTS

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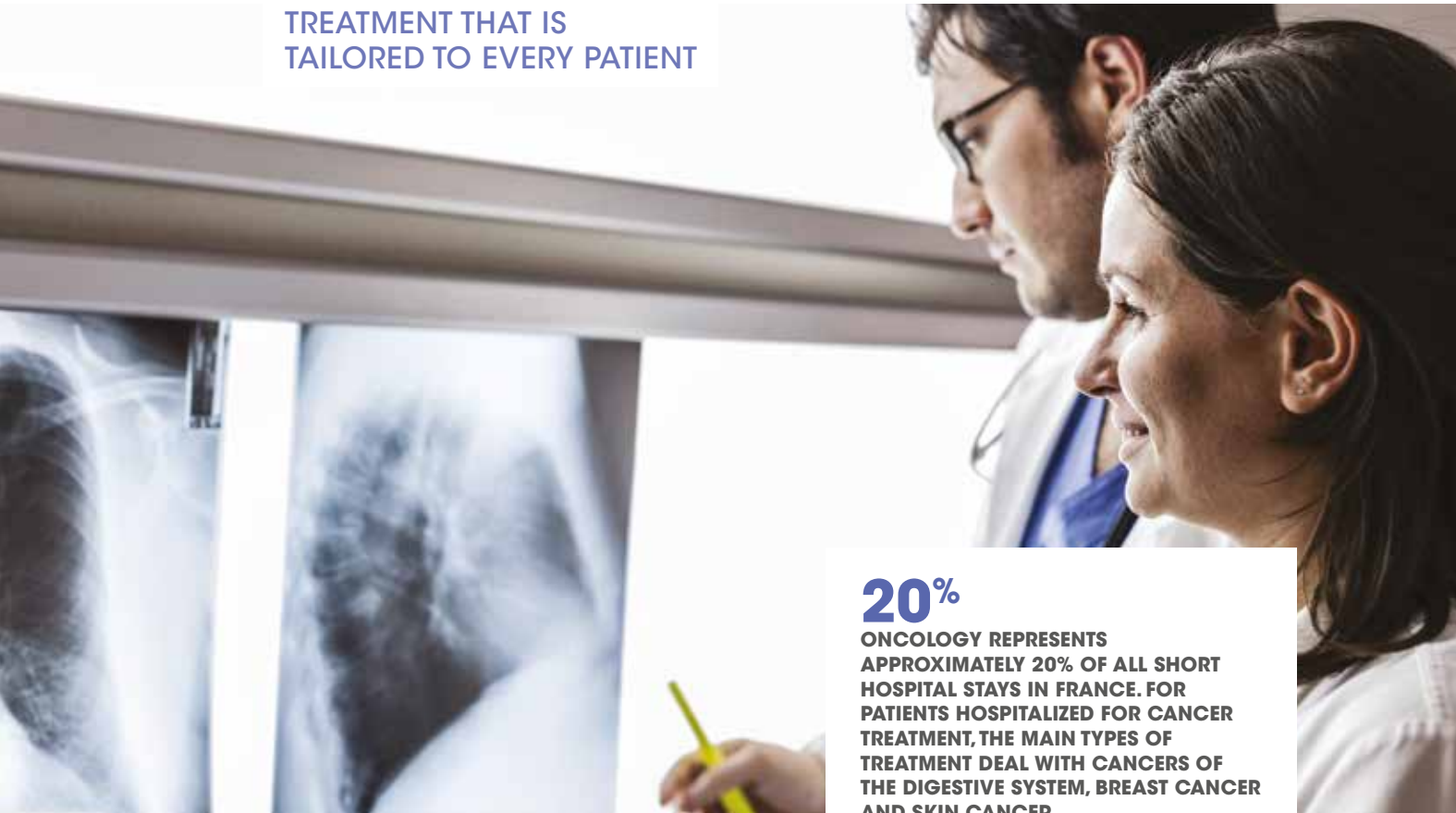
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ONCOLOGY

TREATMENT THAT IS
TAILORED TO EVERY PATIENT



20%
ONCOLOGY REPRESENTS APPROXIMATELY 20% OF ALL SHORT HOSPITAL STAYS IN FRANCE. FOR PATIENTS HOSPITALIZED FOR CANCER TREATMENT, THE MAIN TYPES OF TREATMENT DEAL WITH CANCERS OF THE DIGESTIVE SYSTEM, BREAST CANCER AND SKIN CANCER.

Cancer care in France is structured around a system of authorizations: healthcare establishments must have a specific authorization accorded by their Regional health agency to treat cancer patients. Organizing care in this way ensures quality treatment across the entire country. Specific treatment programmes have been created to meet the needs of rare cancer patients or those with genetic predispositions as well as elderly and young cancer patients.

The national cancer genetics programme includes consultations for people with family histories that may suggest hereditary types of cancer so they can receive genetic testing.

France also has special cancer treatment centres (CLCC) in addition to its hospital networks. These centres, which treat cancer exclusively, handle treatment, research and teaching with a view to continually improving the quality and accessibility of care.

IN FOCUS

"CYBER-SURGERY" AT THE IHU DE STRASBOURG

Founded in 2011, the Institut Hospitalo-univer-sitaire (IHU) de Strasbourg, sometimes referred to as the "institute of minimally invasive imaging-guided surgery" seeks to offer patients innovative therapies for minimally invasive procedures as quickly as possible. In July 2012, it was the first establishment to undertake "cyber-surgery" by operating on a 36-year-old patient with a liver tumour. The tumour resection was done via robotic surgery guided by augmented reality, which consists of taking virtual images and fusing them with images taken in real time by a camera inserted into the patient's body during the operation. The patient was able to leave the hospital just one week after the operation.

+ ESTABLISHMENTS

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TESTIMONIAL

PR PATRICE VIENS
President of UNICANCER

France is internationally renowned for its expertise in cancer care, treatment and research. As a result, it has one of the best cancer survival rates in Europe. French establishments have been able to stay ahead of recent and promising developments such as personalized medicine and immunotherapy and have some of the most cutting-edge technology in the world. We present to you here a selection of these excellent establishments that offer multi-disciplinary, attentive and innovative treatment to cancer patients.

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ORTHOPAEDIC SERVICES

AT THE CENTRE OF TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS



150,000

TOTAL HIP REPLACEMENTS ARE CARRIED OUT EVERY YEAR IN FRANCE. CURRENTLY, MORE THAN A MILLION FRENCH PEOPLE HAVE UNDERGONE THIS TYPE OF OPERATION.

Orthopaedic services involve the treatment of injuries and malformations of the musculoskeletal system (bones, joints, ligaments, muscles, tendons and spinal column). France has a number of renowned establishments specialized in this field, and French orthopaedic surgeons have developed a range of innovations, from spinal instruments to reverse total shoulder replacements and bone substitutes, to name but a few.

Advanced medical devices, minimally invasive surgical techniques, the use of specific anaesthetic protocols and pain management have made it possible to carry out more procedures on an outpatient basis, with patients returning home the same day. Certain French establishments are leaders in outpatient surgery.

With the development of biomaterials and 3D printers, researchers today are focused on creating personalized prosthetics patients can keep for life.

IN FOCUS

SHOULDER HEMIARTHROPLASTY AS AN OUTPATIENT PROCEDURE AT THE CHU DE TOULOUSE

Outpatient procedures are now available even for major operations. In late August 2015, a patient underwent a hemiarthroplasty operation (humeral head replacement) as an outpatient procedure at the Hôpital Pierre-Paul Riquet located at the Purpan site. The operation was completed in under an hour and the patient was able to return home the same day. She received follow-up care at home, while proper use of patient-controlled analgesia (PCA) administered via a pump allowed the patient to manage her pain as needed.

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TESTIMONIAL

DR ARNAUD GODENECHE,
Shoulder surgery specialist
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Hip and knee surgery specialist
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Demand for prosthetic replacements or ligament repair of one or more joints is experiencing considerable growth due to an ageing population and patients' desire to maintain good quality of life. French orthopaedic surgery is renowned, not only for its quality but for its scientific drive and creativity in terms of innovation, proven by the many concepts that have become international benchmarks. Access to treatment is fast and affordable in France compared to many industrialized countries, where wait times can reach several years and costs can be prohibitive. As a result, French orthopaedic surgery is appealing to patients from all walks of life.

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PAEDIATRICS

TEAMS SPECIALIZED
IN TREATING CHILDREN



7,000

PAEDIATRIC DOCTORS PRACTISE
IN FRANCE, MOST OF WHICH WORK IN
HEALTHCARE ESTABLISHMENTS

Many parents decide to have their child treated in France in order to benefit from the highly specialized treatments available in paediatric units located around the country.

The establishments offering specialized care for children have one team of paediatric doctors – those best equipped to handle all aspects of child development – and a second team of paediatric surgeons. Having an on-site paediatric life support unit is an additional guarantee. Hygiene practices are more stringent and there are an increased number of isolation rooms due to the frequent occurrence of contagious illnesses in children.

Fractures, appendectomies, tonsillectomies, adenoidectomies and ear tube insertions are among the most frequent paediatric procedures. More invasive operations, such as on the spine, heart, face or brain, are (thankfully) much rarer. Any treatment, which should take into consideration parents who may be understandably worried, is organized by a team of professionals who are experts in dealing with the specific needs of children, including paediatric nurses, doctors and surgeons; anaesthesiologists; radiologists; psychologists; educators and teachers.

IN FOCUS

A TEENAGER SUFFERING FROM SICKLE CELL DISEASE RECEIVES GENE THERAPY

In September 2014, a team led by Professor Marina Cavazzana at the Hôpital Necker-Enfants Malades (AP-HP) and the Imagine Institute (Paris) carried out gene therapy on a teenager with sickle cell disease. The patient is doing well, with normal haemoglobin production at 51.5%. Sickle cell disease is the most frequently occurring genetic disease in the world (around 50 million people suffer from it). One day gene therapy could replace transplants when a compatible donor cannot be found for the patient.



TESTIMONIAL

PR ARNAUD PICARD

Director of Maxillofacial Surgery and Paediatric Plastic Surgery at the Hôpital Necker (AP-HP)

Families from the Middle East, eastern and southern Europe and Africa regularly bring their children here for treatment because of our medical and surgical teams who are internationally renowned, namely through our forty rare disease centres. Child-centred care, synergy between the medical and surgical teams, experienced anaesthesiologists for the most serious of cases and cutting-edge techniques are all part of the quality of treatment families are looking for when they come to France.



+ ESTABLISHMENTS

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REHABILITATION SERVICES

CONTINUITY THROUGHOUT TREATMENT

France is unique in that it offers numerous establishments, both public and private, specialized in rehabilitation services.

These establishments are considered comprehensive when they accept all types of patients after a hospital stay (surgical procedure), or specialized when they accept patients who require specific care, namely geriatric care. Their aim is to coordinate treatment and help patients regain their autonomy after a serious procedure so they may return home.

Patients at these establishments benefit from medical monitoring and care over a limited period of time, handled by a multidisciplinary team of nurses and rehabilitation specialists, including physical therapists, psychomotor therapists, ergotherapists, speech and language therapists, and other specialists to oversee specific physical activity. These professionals use a variety of effective techniques and equipment.

An individualized treatment plan is created for each patient in order to:

- › limit or reduce physical and sensory disabilities
- › rehabilitation of the mind-body connection
- › continued treatment and monitoring of care
- › preparation for discharge and return to work

Specific treatment for elderly patients is designed around their needs and several types of rehabilitation methods:

- › functional rehabilitation (orthopaedic or neurological), which deals with physical mobility
- › occupational therapy, to help patients carry out daily tasks
- › social rehabilitation, which aims to help restore confidence, create a daily routine and apply adaptations to daily life.



34 DAYS
THE AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY IN A
REHABILITATION CENTRE AND TREATMENT,
DEPENDENT ON THE PATIENT'S HEALTH
STATUS AND DEGREE OF DEPENDENCY.*

IN FOCUS

CHILDREN: SPECIALIZED KNOW-HOW

Certain rehabilitation centres are specialized in caring for children and teens with severe or chronic illnesses such as obesity or respiratory diseases.

These paediatric centres are unique in that they combine medical care with psychological treatment, education and schooling.

This holistic approach aims to effectively prevent chronic illness from childhood.

*Source: DREES, 2011



TESTIMONIAL

PR GILLES RODE
President of SOFMER*, Hôpital Henry Gabrielle (CHU Lyon)

French healthcare establishments have developed expertise in evaluating complex motor, sensory, cognitive and bladder-sphincter disorders as well as in treatments and adaptations to help patients remain as autonomous as possible.

Especially remarkable are the rehabilitation programmes for neurological, cardiovascular and musculo-skeletal disorders, in addition to the coordinated treatment programmes for cancer and metabolic diseases.

* French Society of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine



TESTIMONIAL

DR ISABELLE ALMERAS
Medical Specialist in Physical Medicine, Rehabilitation and burns treatment
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Rehabilitation of victims of severe burns contributes to the reduction of functional, aesthetics but also psychological impairment caused by the burn. France is well known for the quality of its functional rehabilitation facilities, thanks to specialized medical and nursing teams and access to the latest equipment. Care is delivered to the patients in all safety in a comfortable environment to prepare for the return home in the best possible conditions.

+ ESTABLISHMENTS

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DISCOVER FRANCE

A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE

Every region – and indeed every city – has its own identity. Staying in one of them is an opportunity to discover a wealth of culture, heritage and gastronomy like no other.

★ **Paris**, the City of Light, capital of fashion and romance, is known the world over for its beauty and history. It nurtures modernity through a cultural and creative offering that is among the best in the world: museums, cinemas, theatres, concert halls and operas make this a global capital of culture.

★ **Lille**, a city in northern France known for its warm and welcoming people, Flemish architecture and dynamic culture.

★ To the east, **Strasbourg** balances an old town that is a UNESCO World Heritage Site with the bold modern architecture of its European quarter where EU institutions are located.

★ **Reims**, where coronation ceremonies for France's kings long took place, played a key role in the country's history, a fact that is obvious in the city's impressive heritage. Reims is also the capital of the Champagne region, whose bubbly is prized the world over.

★ To the west is **Nantes**, just 30 minutes from the Atlantic Ocean and the entry point to Brittany and the Val de Loire, a region celebrated for its Renaissance-era castles.

★ Not far away is **Angers**, whose centuries-old way of life is reflected in its mediaeval castle, fine food culture and local vineyards.

★ To the south is **Bordeaux**, near the Atlantic coast, the world capital of wine with vineyards that have been cultivated for more than two millennia.

★ To the southwest is **Toulouse**, "the Pink City", a student city of easy living and cutting-edge space research.

★ If you're looking to cool off, head to the Alps: **Lyon**, for its gastronomy, bustling piers and city centre that has the honour of being a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

★ And **Grenoble**, overlooked by the Vercors Massif, the Belledonne peaks and the Chartreuse forests that stretch all the way into the city.

★ Cosmopolitan **Montpellier**, which is home to the world's oldest medical university, in a region that boasts six UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

★ An entry to the Mediterranean and "gateway to the Middle East", **Marseille**, with its southern French flair, is the country's second largest city. It was named European Capital of Culture in 2013.

★ Ideally located along the Mediterranean coast and not far from the mountains, **Nice** is as well known for its tourist appeal as it is for its Mediterranean lifestyle and heritage.

« France is the world's top tourist destination



France is not only recognized for the quality of its healthcare but also stands out for its culture and varied landscapes.

For patients as well as those accompanying them, travelling to France is also an opportunity to discover the country's exceptional heritage.

With 39 sites on UNESCO's World Heritage list, 8,000 museums, countless monuments and a wide variety of events, visitors won't be disappointed with France's cultural offering.

If nature is more your style, spectacular views await along the sea, in the mountains or in the countryside, all just a stone's

throw away from major cities. Many regions and cities have an especially well-developed hotel and sporting infrastructures, which are perfect for relaxing and recovering.

France's cities also offer some of the best shopping around: from luxury clothing and accessories to art, handcrafted items or fine food, opportunities abound. Non-European residents can also benefit from a VAT refund (value added tax).

French regions set their own rhythms, guided by an exceptional cultural life and architectural heritage. They tell their story through local dishes, with recipes that are sometimes known around the globe and sometimes closely guarded.

From the Channel to Provence, Brittany, Alsace, Burgundy, the South-west and Corsica, visitors can discover each region through its specialty dishes, not to mention celebrated French wines. With wine options from Burgundy, Bordeaux, Alsace and Champagne, there is something for everyone, whether amateur or connoisseur. UNESCO declared "The Gastronomic Meal of the French" Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2010.

France embodies a way of life that emphasizes taking care of yourself.

Find more information on travelling in France at: www.france.fr

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