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NEW BILL: Health insurers can now have plans to provide coverage for various facilities abroad

Travel Easy. You're Covered Worldwide

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The Insurance Bill that was passed by Parliament last week and became an Act has changed the definition of health insurance from covering risks only within India to providing service worldwide. That is, now health insurers will have plans to provide medical coverage outside India as well.

"Till now, you would have to buy a travel insurance plan that covers only medical emergencies and evacuation costs. The new plans promise to provide overseas benefits like pre-diagnosed planned hospitalisation, second opinions, outpatient treatments, apart from sudden sickness during travel.

"The construct of international covers is different from a travel policy that covers treatment costs for medical needs arising during international travel. Also, the maximum term of such policy is generally up to 180 days," said Suresh Chandra, COO and Chief Quality Officer, Max Bupa.

WHAT'S AVAILABLE

A few standalone health insurers, including Max Bupa, already provide some kind of international coverage that were introduced much before the Insurance Act. Max Bupa's flagship product Heartbeat provides coverage for nine critical illness in 190 countries and up to a sum insured of ₹1 crore. Condition being that you purchase a plan that has minimum sum insured of ₹15 lakh and that the illness is pre-determined and diagnosed by a doctor in India. This coverage is targeted towards retired senior citizens, frequent travellers and their extended families. Religare Health offers worldwide coverage for certain specialised

treatments with its ₹50 lakh and ₹60 lakh sum insured plans. The premium of a ₹50 lakh plan for a 30-year-old individual is ₹17,463, including taxes. Similarly, Cigna TKK's plan covers only 'emergency' treatments.

Sum insurance ranges from ₹2.5 lakh to ₹1 crore, and the premium for a 30-year-old starts at ₹4,045 and goes up to ₹30,889.

"There is a sizeable segment of consumers, who for various reasons, prefer to avail certain specialised treatment overseas. Price is not a deterrent in this case and they are okay with opting for a higher sum insured to avail treatment abroad," says Anuj Gulati, CEO, Religare Health Insurance, which already provides a worldwide coverage benefit.

WHAT'S COMING UP

Going ahead, however, insurers are expected to offer comprehensive coverage. Bajaj Allianz General Insurance doesn't provide an overseas indemnity health cover but plans to come out with a product soon.

"The major difference between a regular health plan and the new plans with inter-

national coverage is that these plans will typically have higher sum insured. The premiums will also be higher considering the currency exchange rate," says Renuka Kanvade, Assistant Vice President - Health Insurance, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance.

"The new plans will be add-ons or will be incorporated within comprehensive policies with higher sum insured," says Sanjay Datta, chief underwriting and claims, ICICI Lombard General. Eligibility criteria will require you to be medically fit. "These covers may not be easily available to those with pre-existing conditions and critical illnesses," adds Datta.

Also, it will be a regular annual indemnity coverage that covers in-patient coverage. Out-patient expenses will not be covered.

The coverage will be categories under two categories—elective planned hospitalisation and emergency treatment. "In case of emergency, immediate care will be covered but beyond a certain period the policyholder would have to continue treatment in India to be eligible for claims. In case it is a planned hospitalisation, where the

patient needs special treatment abroad, mostly you'll have to take the reimbursement route as it is very difficult for the insurer to have such a huge global cashless network," says Datta. So, insurers plan to tie-up with TPAs that service globally to facilitate international claims.

New plans may be slightly cheaper. "We are trying to come up with a cheaper variant that will cover most of the treatments in India but in case of emergency or special cases will let you access international healthcare facilities," says Datta.

- International Plans Will Cover:**
- In-patient hospitalisations cost (including day care treatments)
 - Critical illness benefit
 - Air ambulance and road ambulance expenses
 - Travel expenses for person accompanying patient
 - Medical evacuation

SHOULD YOU BUY ONE?

Right now only a handful of insurers provide this option. Till the industry comes up with better and more cost effective coverage, it doesn't make sense to pay a higher premium for international plans with limited benefits. Assuming you would want to go for a specialised treatment only for serious ailments, a frugal option will be to purchase a critical illness plan combo with your regular hospitalisation cover (see 'Combo is Cheaper').

If you pick a high-sum insured critical illness plan, you are eligible to get the full amount as lump sum. Frequent-flyers can add a multi-trip travel plan to this. The cheaper international travel policy will cover emergencies.

COMBO IS CHEAPER

₹36,271 for ₹15 lakh Max Bupa Heartbeat plan (international cover for 9 critical illnesses)	VS	₹13,178 for regular hospitalisation cover of ₹15 lakh Heartbeat (Gold) plan	+	₹5,002 for Religare Assure critical illness plan for 20 ailments	=	₹41,273
						₹23,182 for Religare Health plan (international cover for 9 critical illnesses)
						₹18,091 SAVINGS

ILLUSTRATION: ANIMISHA

Centreport | WHICH ARE INDIA'S BIGGEST CAR RECALLS?

Maruti Suzuki recently recalled more than 33,000 cars. This brings the total number of such vehicles to nearly 8 lakh since July 2012, when the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) started the voluntary vehicle recall in the country.

<p>Ford India recalled 1.66 LAKH Ford Figgo hatchbacks and Classic sedans in September 2013</p> <p>PROBLEM: Power-assisted steering (PAS) hose and rear suspension system</p>	<p>Maruti Suzuki recalled 1.03 LAKH cars from the Ertiga, Swift and DZire ranges in April 2014</p> <p>PROBLEM: Fuel filler neck</p>	<p>Honda Cars India recalled 42,672 City models in June 2013</p> <p>PROBLEM: Power window switch</p>	<p>Mahindra & Mahindra recalled 23,519 Scorpio SUVs in July 2014</p> <p>PROBLEM: Pressure regulating valves</p>	<p>Ford India recalled 20,700 EcoSports in December 2014</p> <p>PROBLEM: Airbag and fuel line</p>
<p>General Motors recalled 1.14 LAKH Chevrolet Tavera in July 2013</p> <p>PROBLEM: Emissions and specifications</p>	<p>Toyota Kirloskar recalled 44,989 Innovas in April 2014</p> <p>PROBLEM: Spiral cable mounted on the steering wheel</p>	<p>Maruti Suzuki recalled 33,098 Alto 800 and Alto K10s in March 2015</p> <p>PROBLEM: Right door latch assembly</p>	<p>Nissan Motor India recalled 22,188 Micra and Sunny cars in May 2013</p> <p>PROBLEM: Master brake cylinder</p>	<p><small>SOURCE: NEWS AND AUTO MANUFACTURER WEBSITES</small></p>