

*Vermont Republic.”*

*Unwilling to yield to what they see as dictatorial federal enforcement, these grassroots movements are directed toward downsizing government and decentralizing decision making. As federal authorities take more control, we forecast these movements will gain in popularity and participation.*

**Trendpost:** *Despite Washington’s pledge and Defense Secretary Robert Gates’ assurance that the US must “resist China’s use of force or coercion against Taiwan and assist Taipei in maintaining its self-defense,” military intervention would end in defeat and humiliation for America.*

*In addition, foreign involvement in the long running battle between the Chinese homeland and the breakaway republic would dramatically destabilize the region, increase global tensions and undermine the world economy. ■*

## **MEDICAL TOURISM**

**War and peace come and go. But the one constant in good times and bad ... yesterday, today and tomorrow ... is personal health, and how to preserve it. In the Global Age, just as manufacturing, call centers and other professional services have gone abroad and are outsourced, so too is new millennium medical care.**

Like executives and entrepreneurs that scour the earth to find the best countries to do the best deals for the best price, today’s consumers are globetrotting to find the best prices for the best medical treatments. It’s the next big trend in globalization ... and a Top Trend for 2007.

Known for decades among the “in-crowd” who traveled to Costa Rica for big discounts on dental work and cosmetic fix-ups – called medical tourism by some because treatments are often followed by R&R in restful environments – the trend has moved mainstream and to more distant shores.

While the bread and butter of “medical tourism” is still in the dental and cosmetic side of the business, with more Americans without health insurance, or with policies that fall short of needs, robust international expansion is under way.

### **THE BIG PUSH IS ON**

Outside the States, the “initiated” who knew what to do and where to go to get swifter treatment than their nation’s systems could provide ... or for treatments that their health plans didn’t cover ... have traveled the medical tourism route for decades with scant public notice.

Leading the charge to India, Thailand, Singapore,

Malaysia, Brazil, Argentina, and South Africa – which have joined Costa Rica as popular medical destinations – are America’s 78 million baby boomers. Pushing 50 and passing 60 – overweight, overstressed, over medicated, out of shape, short of cash and short on health coverage – the boomers, babies no more, are breaking down and in need of medical repair. Unable to afford new joints, fix leaky valves or replace broken parts, consumers can buy facelifts, transplants, bypasses, stem cells ... and a full range of orthopedic, prostate, cardiac, neurological and advanced cancer surgeries at overseas medical destinations, at a fraction of what it costs in the States.

And unlike the post WW II days of banana republics and third world conditions, today’s newly emerging nations’ medical facilities – while not always up to par – often win, place and show when compared to US facilities in technology, professionalism and standards. (Escorts Heart Institute and Research Centre in India reports a death rate of patients during surgery that is less than half that of most major hospitals in the United States.)

And in terms of postoperative care, bedside manner and other “human services,” the overseas models can often exceed stateside offerings.

**Trendpost:** *In terms of its global development, the medical outsourcing trend in 2007 is equivalent to what international trade was before the days of NAFTA, the WTO ... and when China and Russia were sealed by iron curtains. By all measurements, this trend is now just reaching its growth stage. And like a sprouting adolescent, it will quickly change, take on new characteristics and further develop its identity. The broad scope of services involved in matching patient needs with qualified medical destinations, finding the best prices ... plus the travel component ... are just a few of the many entrepreneurial opportunities available in the field.*

**Trendpost:** *The estimated 750,000 US citizens expected to go abroad for surgery in 2007 is still tiny when compared to the millions of surgeries performed each year in the \$2 trillion US healthcare system. Johns Hopkins University’s affiliation with a major Singapore hospital is just the first wave of firms and institutions establishing overseas ties for outsourced medical treatment.*

*Just as US manufacturers moved overseas for production, US based doctors and health organizations will be off-shoring their operations, looking to set up hospitals and clinics in the most cost productive locations.*

**Trendpost:** *Air-ambulance services, hospital ships, recovery retreats ... anything and everything that will help ease the stress of patient travel and provide an atmosphere for recovery will fuel the Medical Tourism trend.*

*Small nations, such as Cuba, that already serve global health customers, can become prime medical destinations and enjoy vast wealth if their health tourism business is developed and managed wisely. ■*

## SYSTEMIC RECESSION

**The US is sliding into a long-term economic downturn that will eat away at the nation's well-being before it shows up in the official numbers. Despite what Washington says, the Dow does or Wall Street claims ... during 2007 the facts of life on Main Street will clearly show what Americans are already beginning to feel – "Recession."**

Weighed down with massive loads of debt and locked into jobs that limit opportunities to pay it off, the paycheck to paycheck public will feel the pinch in their pocket books and businesses will be hit hard in their bottom lines long before recession becomes "official." Like mindlessly waiting for the word from the higher ups to finally declare the bloody Iraq civil war, a "Civil War" ... by the time the "experts" decide their basket of statistics adds up to recession, economic conditions will have long since deteriorated.

For example, even with the many indicators that spell "Real Estate Recession" – and with the numbers getting worse with each new quarter – the "R" word is never used to define the industry's sharp decline. Instead it's said the market's "slowed" and conditions are "soft."

As data proves and the facts bare out, it was the Federal Reserve's induced 46-year low interest rates that ignited the building boom and sparked the home equity refinancing mania that pulled the US out of the 2001 recession. However, after raising rates 17 consecutive times, and with little room to bring them lower (without risking a dollar crash), there are no Fed tools left to boost the housing market or re-spark a re-fi boom. (See "A Bernanke Recession," *Trends Journal*, Summer 2006.) Without the cash to build or the means to borrow, the nation's engine of growth is out of fuel and there is no industry, service or product in the pipeline to drive future economic growth.

### REAGAN RE-DO

In addition to the many indices that point to a sustained downturn, and ample evidence that conditions will not improve, the changing political tides are leaving the nation's people with little faith in a leader whose popularity keeps plunging. Although history is re-written to recast failed presidents as "elder statesmen" (after they've left office), when Ronald Reagan's Teflon coat began to peel,

the loss of public confidence prompted us to forecast the 1987 stock market crash:

*Celente said much of the nation's recent prosperity was built on citizens' confidence in President Reagan. A number of recent events, including the Iran/Contra arms scandal, congressional override of Reagan's veto of South African sanctions and Nicaragua's capture of a crew member in a US registered plane carrying unauthorized arms have damaged that "confidence shield," according to Celente.*

*The President has "proven himself merely to be a politician of the same cloth as any other politician who has lied to the public," he said. ("1987: The Year it All Collapses," Daily Freeman, 23 January 1987.)*

Similarly, as President Bush's popularity slumps and his skills are questioned, a lack of public confidence in those who govern seeps deeply into the nation's psyche. With fading hope for sound solutions – as it was just before the stock market crash in 1987 when Ronald Reagan's credentials were being questioned and when the dollar was also in crisis – today another perfect storm is brewing that will hit US financial markets before 2007 ends.

**Trendpost:** *Businesses should consider expanding options by moving in new directions to find additional income streams as old ones dry up and/or diminish in value as prices are cut and margins shrink in response to fighting fierce competition. The trend for a long-term decline in America's standard of living has long been forecast and there is nothing on the horizon that will renew post WWII levels of prosperity (jobs, education, health care services, etc.) which the country once enjoyed. (See "Dealing with a 'Five-O' Economy," Trends Journal, Winter 2002.)*

*Beyond real estate, among the sectors hardest hit in the continuing downturn will be mid and low retail markets and the mid-range restaurant business. In this low income/high debt climate, consumers ... looking for high taste but having less income ... will spend into the affordable sophistication sectors that provide up-range quality at moderate price points. (See "Affordable Sophistication," Trends Journal, Winter 2005.)*

*People in sales jobs in declining sectors, or workers in those areas that are already feeling the economic pinch and will be hit even harder as recession sets in, should be actively hunting for new opportunities to find employment.*

**Trendpost:** *The prognosis is simple and our prediction is clear. If the beleaguered US dollar (nearing 2-year lows against the euro and at a 14-year low against the British pound) continues to dive, it could trigger a sell-off*