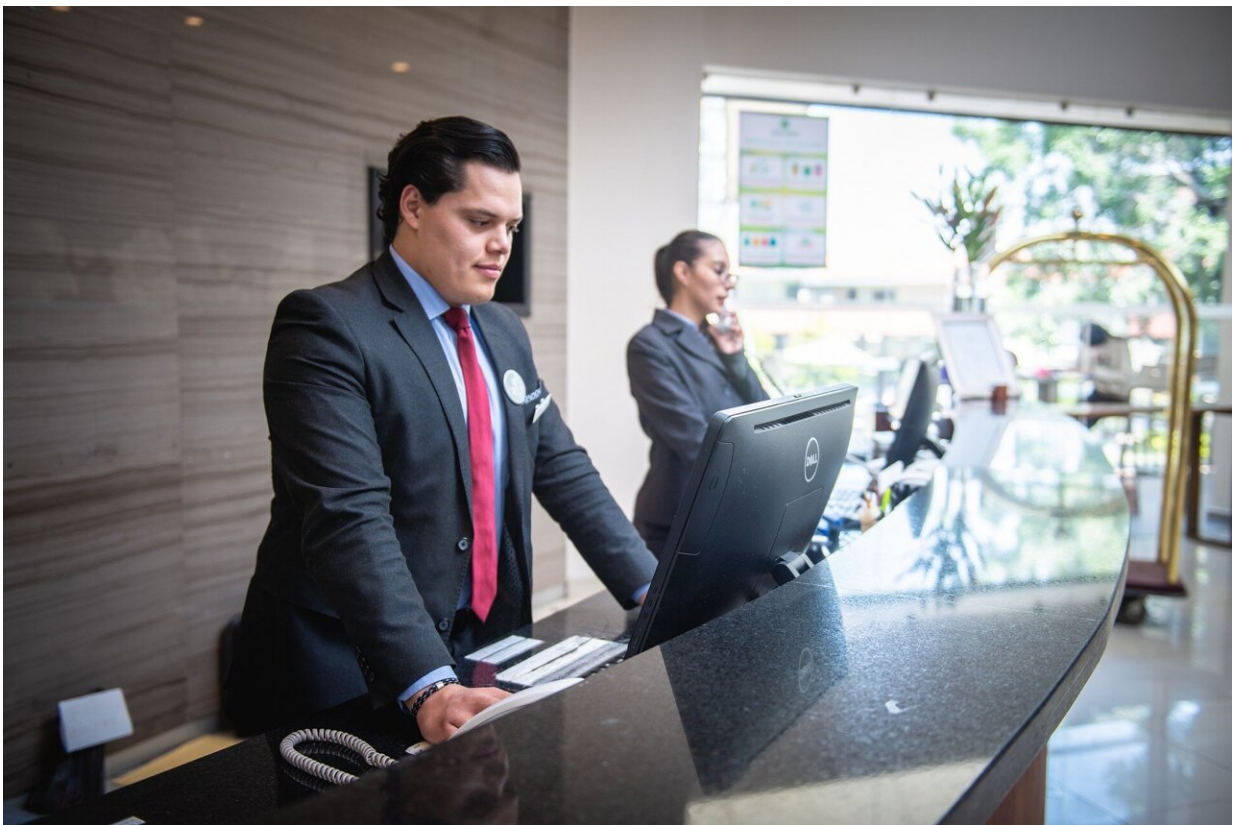


Can I come, too? How tourism can include people whose health conditions usually keep them at home

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Following the disruption of COVID-19, the global tourism industry has largely opened up again; however, traveling remains a serious challenge

for a large group of people.

The World Health Organization estimates 20% of the world's population suffer from non-communicable chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, cancer, or [mental disorders](#).

These conditions can make traveling difficult, while some people may even avoid taking holidays altogether.

A cross-disciplinary research project from Edith Cowan University has highlighted the impacts this decision can have on people with these health challenges, and outlined the future repercussions for the industry as a whole.

Through collaboration between ECU's School of Business and Law and its Center for Precision Health, the project has put forth the concept of "travel therapy," which sees [tourism](#) as a means of improving mental health and well-being.

Researcher Dr. Jun Wen said it is vital the tourism industry catered more to [vulnerable people](#) with physical or psychological disorders, a market he described as important but too often overlooked.

"Most are able to travel but remain vulnerable during trips and need intensive services," he said.

"The world has an aging population, so there will be more and more people dealing with the challenges that brings, like dementia, [physical limitations](#) and so on.

"There are also more people being diagnosed with [mental health](#) issues, such as depression and anxiety.

"Tourism needs to be able to accommodate vulnerable travelers such as these for the industry's survival—but also because health is important and as our previous work has shown, tourism can help support health."

What the industry can do

Dr. Wen said there are numerous initiatives which could make destinations more accessible for vulnerable people.

Strategies could be implemented throughout the tourism industry chain (food, accommodation, transportation, travel, shopping, and entertainment) and could include considerations or allowances for caregivers who may need to accompany travelers.

Dr. Wen said education was critical.

"Staff and stakeholders need training to be made aware of vulnerable travelers' needs and demands," he said.

"This can include developing manuals to standardize services for vulnerable travelers, enhancing accessible infrastructure and equipping professional emergency and care facilities appropriately, such as with first-aid tools.

"The industry can also customize services for different traveler segments, such as people with dementia, depression or anxiety."

Dr. Wen said [technological advances](#) could also play a great role in bringing the benefits of tourism to more people.

"Not everyone can take physical trips," he said.

"The [tourism industry](#) should develop virtual products that enable all

travelers to be present in a destination and to enjoy fun and health-related benefits."

"Travel medicine in hospitality: An interdisciplinary perspective" was published in the *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*.

More information: Fangli Hu et al, Travel medicine in hospitality: an interdisciplinary perspective, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* (2023). [DOI: 10.1108/IJCHM-05-2022-0574](https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-05-2022-0574)

Provided by Edith Cowan University

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