

Article

An Excursion into the History of Health Tourism Through the Literary Works of Anton Chekhov

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Abstract

This study aims to explore how Chekhov depicted health tourism and medical institutions in his works, how he used illness as a narrative device, and what these depictions reveal about social attitudes toward health and medicine.

The study employs a qualitative content analysis of Chekhov's literary works, focusing on references to health resorts, medical practices, and illness. Frequency analysis was conducted to quantify the most mentioned health destinations, diseases, and medical treatments in his works. The research also examines the stylistic and thematic role of illness in Chekhov's narrative structures.

Findings indicate that Chekhov frequently referenced both Russian and European health destinations, including Yalta, Crimea, Kislovodsk, and Baden-Baden. His works highlight a variety of medical conditions such as tuberculosis, neurasthenia, rheumatism, and psychological disorders, often using them as metaphors for existential and social struggles. His minimalist and psychologically nuanced style allowed him to depict illness not just as a physical ailment but as a symbol of human fragility and social inequalities. Furthermore, Chekhov's health resorts serve as spaces where characters undergo personal transformation, reflecting the broader cultural belief in the healing power of travel.

Chekhov's literary representation of health tourism offers valuable insights into historical medical practices and the social perceptions of illness during his era. His works contribute to the understanding of health tourism as both a medical necessity and a cultural phenomenon. By integrating realism with psychological depth, Chekhov created a nuanced portrait of the human experience of illness, self-discovery, and healing.

Keywords: healing, health destination, illness, rejuvenation, resort, social issues.

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Introduction

The concept of healing as a holistic integration of body, mind, and spirit is deeply rooted in different traditions, offering a unique framework for understanding suffering and restoration (Schmalz, 2024). Health tourism dates to ancient times when people travelled to sacred sites, natural hot springs, and wellness centers for healing and rejuvenation (Tonga et al., 2021). In ancient Greece, Epidaurus was one of the earliest known destinations for health tourism (Pavli & Maltezou, 2024). The Romans also popularized the use of thermal baths for their therapeutic benefits, building bathhouses across the Roman Empire, many of which became famous destinations for healing (Karabatos et al., 2021). These perspectives enrich our interpretation of health-seeking journeys in Chekhov's works, where characters often navigate illness physically and existentially in search of meaning and redemption.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, the European elite travelled to spa towns like Bath in England or Baden-Baden in Germany to benefit from natural mineral waters (Berezutskyi & Berezutska, 2020). The modern concept of health tourism emerged in the 20th century, with more people travelling to seek advanced medical procedures, including facilities for people with disabilities (Parvez & Ahmed, 2023). By the 21st century, health tourism had grown into a significant global industry (Wong & Sa'aid Hazley, 2021).

The history of health tourism in Russia has its roots in the natural healing properties of the country's diverse landscapes. In the 18th century, under the reign of Peter the Great, Russia began developing its spa culture inspired by European practices (Aksenova et al., 2020; Daykhes et al., 2020). Peter the Great was a proponent of balneotherapy and helped establish some of the earliest spa resorts. One of the most famous, the Caucasian Mineral Waters region in the North Caucasus, became a prominent health tourism destination known for its therapeutic hot springs and mineral-rich waters. Throughout the Soviet era, health tourism in Russia took on a more organized and state-supported character (Osadchuk et al., 2020). The government promoted health resorts as part of the broader Soviet healthcare system. Treatments focused on natural therapies, including mineral baths, mud treatments, and therapeutic exercises, and were seen as essential to maintaining the workforce's health.

In literature, many authors have focused on the themes of health, medicine, and the lives of doctors, often reflecting the socio-cultural and personal implications of these topics (Quirarte-Ruvalcaba, 2024; Young, 2023). For example, Thomas Mann's novel *The Magic Mountain* uses the setting of a tuberculosis sanatorium to address health tourism and broader existential and philosophical concerns (Devindrappa &

Shabina, 2023). In Doctor Pascal, Émile Zola wrote about the life of a physician solving the problems of heredity, medical ethics, and science (Jones, 2021). A doctor, Arthur Conan Doyle, created the iconic character Sherlock Holmes, whose methods were inspired by the diagnostic techniques of medicine (Chapman, 2023). His novel *The Stark Munro Letters* also presented his medical background and personal experiences as a physician. In the modern era, writers have continued exploring the medical profession and health-related themes, often emphasizing doctors' personal lives and ethical challenges. For instance, Abraham Verghese's *Cutting for Stone* offers a detailed portrayal of life in a medical setting, focusing on the complex relationships between physicians and patients (Moskal, 2023). Similarly, in *House of God*, Samuel Shem offers a satirical yet profound exploration of the pressures doctors face in training, commenting on the psychological and physical toll of the medical profession (Nickson, 2020). In addition to focusing on the lives of doctors, these works also highlight how health tourism and medical care intersect with personal identity and societal expectations, making medicine a central theme in literature across different periods and genres.

Further investigation of the theme of seeking physical and mental recovery in various destinations through literature showed a powerful reflection of the human desire for healing and learning local culture (Pedroso et al., 2023). In Henry James' *The Wings of the Dove*, the wealthy Milly Theale travels to Venice, hoping its peaceful environment will soothe her body and mind (Majewska, 2021). In Elizabeth von Arnim's *The Enchanted April*, four women, burdened by the emotional strains of their daily lives, seek refuge in an Italian villa (Samuilova, 2021). The picturesque Mediterranean landscape becomes a haven for their mental rejuvenation. Other authors have also used destinations as spaces for healing and reflection. In *On the Eve*, Ivan Turgenev emphasizes the power of nature, where characters find relief from the pressures of urban life in rural retreats, reflecting on personal challenges and their futures (Xolmatova, 2023). Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* features characters who recover physically and emotionally in the isolated countryside, showing quiet villages as instruments to heal from trauma and social pressures (Priyatno et al., 2024). Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun* portrays Italy, with its rich history and art, as a place for spiritual and psychological healing (Bubay, 2021).

In this context, it is essential to mention the novel *Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert, which became a cultural phenomenon shortly after its publication in 2006. Its widespread popularity can be attributed to the universal themes of self-discovery, healing, personal transformation, and personal growth (Kadam, 2021). Gilbert's journey, beginning in Italy for pleasure, moving to India for spiritual healing, and

ending in Indonesia for balance and love, mirrors the human desire to find meaning in their lives (Seswita & Yeni, 2023). Each destination Gilbert visits represents a distinct aspect of her quest for recovery: in Italy, she indulges in the pleasures of food and the joy of doing nothing, allowing herself to heal emotionally. In India, she embarks on an intense spiritual journey, diving deep into meditation and self-reflection. Finally, she seeks balance between the physical and the spiritual in Indonesia, ultimately finding love and harmony. Through these experiences, Gilbert shows how healing often requires stepping outside one's familiar world and living in new environments.

Anton Chekhov, well-known as a writer and a practicing physician, paid particular attention to health issues in his literary works because of his deep understanding of human suffering, illness, and the fragility of life (Sinha & Tsevat, 2024). His medical background gave him the unique ability to interpret the psychological and physical effects of illness, which he often used to explore broader themes of existentialism, social inequality, and human vulnerability. His empathy for the sick and suffering, rooted in his own experiences as a doctor, allowed him to present multi-faceted characters whose health struggles demonstrate their internal conflicts and the harsh realities around them (Zala & Pandya, 2024). From a young age, he suffered from respiratory problems, and by his mid-20s, he began showing symptoms of tuberculosis. Despite his worsening condition, Chekhov continued to practice medicine and write prolifically, often reflecting on his struggles with illness in his stories (Shalin, 2020).

His declining health forced him to seek refuge in warmer climates, including extended stays in health resorts and sanatoriums, which provided him with temporary relief and inspired some of the poignant settings in his writing. Though his physical strength waned, Chekhov remained resilient, using his personal experience of illness to enrich his works' emotional depth and realism. It is clear from Chekhov's early letters that he was initially skeptical of healthcare destinations, especially those in Russia. His statements for Kislovodsk, the best-known healthcare destination in the Caucasus, summarize his perspective: *"I have not been in Kislovodsk or any other spa city. Those visiting these places all say these cute places are disgusting garbage dumps. I cannot bear to blend poetry with prostitution and peasantry"* (Chekhov, 1974–1983).

Likewise, his letter, which was dated January 4, 1899, also states: *"Yalta is a better place than Nice; it is incomparably cleaner. But Russian spas are poor; therefore, they are boring, very boring, even more boring than going to a fabric treatment"* (Chekhov, 1974–1983). However, the author criticizes the Russian spas because they are far from civilization, and Chekov finds them boring; his opinion of these healthcare destinations changed in the following years due to his deteriorating health. The year

1897 was a turning point in his life in this manner. On April 15, 1897, he wrote to his doctor friend O. F. Iordanov that he would have to settle somewhere in the south. Then, he went to Yalta, a resort city on the Crimean Peninsula, famous for its mild climate (Igić, 2023).

In Anton Chekhov's literary works, healthcare destinations often serve as significant settings that reflect his characters' physical and emotional states while highlighting themes of healing, escape, and self-analysis. Chekhov's experience as a physician influenced his use of sanatoria, health resorts, and hospitals as backdrops where characters confront their physical ailments and societal pressures (Fisher, 2017; Mangold, 2020). For example, in *The Lady with the Dog*, Yalta, a popular health resort at the time, becomes a place of personal transformation and self-discovery for the characters. Similarly, in *Ward No. 6*, a mental hospital symbolizes the confinement of the human spirit, as well as the blurring line between sanity and madness in society. These healthcare settings are often portrayed as spaces where characters seek relief from illness or stress. However, they frequently encounter deeper emotional or existential challenges, making healthcare destinations in Chekhov's works places of healing and profound self-reflection (Theuriau, 2022).

Studying the history of health tourism through the literary works of Anton Chekhov is essential because his writings provide a unique, authentic perspective on the intersection of medicine, travel, and society during his time (Fisher, 2017). Importantly, Chekhov had first-hand knowledge of the medical practices and health conditions of the late 19th century, and his stories often reflect the experiences of people seeking treatment in health resorts, sanatoriums, or travel (Zakharova, 2024). His portrayal of health tourism is medically accurate and explores the emotional and psychological motivations behind seeking wellness away from home. By examining Chekhov's works, we gain exciting data on how health tourism was perceived as both a physical necessity and a social trend. This exploration deepens our understanding of the origins and development of health tourism as a social practice that is still popular.

The literature review and analysis of Chekhov's literary works enabled the research aims to explore how Chekhov reflected and contributed to the understanding of health tourism in his stories. As a result, the following objectives were set:

1. To analyze the geography of health destinations portrayed in the literary works of Anton Chekhov, reflecting his experiences as a physician and his observations of society.
2. To describe medical practices and the experiences of patients and doctors in Chekhov's writings, to understand the historical context and significance of health tourism in Russia during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and

to represent the role health resorts and sanatoriums play for Chekhov's characters.

3. To reveal the peculiarities of Chekhov's literary discourse regarding health destinations, medical issues, and his views on health.

Methodology

In this research, qualitative content analysis was used to describe the health destinations and medical practices in the literary works of Anton Chekhov, and findings were quantified via frequency counts. To address the research questions, literary works of Anton Chekhov and academic studies were selected. Firstly, Chekhov's writings were collected from collections of eBooks (Project Gutenberg, Google Books), digital libraries (JSTOR and Literature Online (LION), a global catalogue of library collections, WorldCat). Secondly, independent searches of Google Scholar, Index Copernicus, DOAJ, Scopus, and Web of Science databases were conducted to identify studies on health tourism by Anton Chekhov and other authors worldwide. To be included in this review, studies had to meet the following criteria:

- 1) Sources should directly address the research questions and themes related to health tourism and medical practices portrayed in Chekhov's literary works. This includes primary texts (Chekhov's stories) and secondary literature (scholarly articles, critiques, and monographs focusing on health themes).
- 2) Academic articles should be published in reputable academic journals (Google Scholar, Index Copernicus, DOAJ, Scopus, and Web of Science). These sources should demonstrate scholarly accuracy and be peer-reviewed to ensure the reliability and validity of the information.
- 3) Sources should represent diverse perspectives and interpretations of Chekhov's works. This can concern different critical approaches (e.g., historical and psychological) to understand the studied themes comprehensively.
- 4) Selected sources should offer contextual background on Chekhov's life, medical career, and writings' historical and social settings.
- 5) Academic sources should employ qualitative methods, content analysis, or discuss qualitative research approaches related to the literature.
- 6) Selected sources should contribute to understanding health tourism and medical practices during Chekhov's time. This includes scholarly works that analyze health destinations, social attitudes towards health, and the role of literature in reflecting these themes in the late 19th century.

We used two groups of search terms to study the research problem. The first group related to health issues and medical practices; it collectively used the following terms when searching the databases: “health tourism” OR “health destination”, “sanatorium” OR “health resort”, OR “therapeutic landscapes” OR “spa town” OR “healing AND recovery”. The second group concerned Anton Chekhov’s biography as a writer and the peculiarities of his literature discourse; this group included the following terms: “Anton Chekhov”, OR “Chekhov’s literature” OR “Chekhov’s short stories” OR “Chekhov’s plays” OR “Chekhov’s letters” OR “Chekhov’s literature discourse” OR “Chekhov’s narrative style” OR “society in Chekhov’s era”. Abstracts that included these keywords were identified and used to determine their relevance based on the abovementioned inclusion criteria. If we could not determine the study’s relevance from the abstract, we read the full article to find the information related to the research topic and answer the research questions.

A ten-question checklist was developed to extract the data from the included sources. These questions focused on identifying key themes, gathering background information, determining methodological frameworks to collect and analyze the data, and exploring how these works contribute to understanding health tourism through literature. Table 1 shows the checklist used during the qualitative content analysis.

Table 1. Checklist for Data Extraction

Question	Variants to choose
Definition of research questions	Does the source clearly articulate the main research questions?
	Does the source specify sub-questions related to health tourism in Chekhov’s works?
	Does the source list primary themes related to health and illness?
	Does the source include themes of emotional and psychological well-being?
	Does the source consider themes of social attitudes towards health?
Selecting literary works	Does the source belong to relevant primary texts by Anton Chekhov: a short story, play, essay, or letter?
	Does the source belong to secondary literature that critically analyses Chekhov’s works?
Gathering background information	Does the source research the historical and cultural context of Chekhov’s life and writing?
	Does the source review literature on the historical context of health tourism in Russia?
Description of methodological framework	Does the source choose qualitative content analysis as the research method?
	Does the source use other methods to organise and analyse the data?
Data collection	Have primary texts and relevant secondary sources been collected?
	Are critical editions of Chekhov’s works used?
	Are interviews, reviews, or critiques of Chekhov’s works used?
Data analysis	Were the relevant excerpts related to health tourism identified?
	Were the data coded according to key themes?

	Were the patterns, similarities, and differences determined across the texts?
Interpretation of findings	Did the findings show how Chekhov's works reflect health tourism practices?
	Did the findings explain the understanding of health in Chekhov's context?
	Were the peculiarities of Chekhov's literary discourse identified?
Literature review	Did the literature review show: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health tourism in literature?• Chekhov's influence on health narratives?
	Were the essential findings and theoretical frameworks summarised from the existing studies?

The data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel. The procedure involved organizing and coding textual data to identify critical themes (health tourism, medical issues, or destinations related to physical and mental recovery). It began by importing the collected text data (literary works or secondary sources) into Excel. Each text (a sentence or paragraph) was placed in individual cells in a column created according to the research questions. Open coding was used initially, where unique themes were noted. As patterns emerge, axial coding was applied to refine and group the themes under broader categories, such as “*significance of health tourism*”, “*geography of health destinations*”, “*medical practices of doctors*”, “*patients' experiences*”, and “*role of health resorts*”. Special attention was paid to the peculiarities of Chekhov's literary discourse. Based on qualitative content analysis, we investigated the linguistic means, stylistic figures, particularly humor and irony, and syntax, which described various health destinations, medical issues, and the author's views on health. The frequency of specific themes was calculated using the Excel COUNTIF function, while pivot tables were used to summarize and organize the data for analysis. The qualitative content analysis method enabled an in-depth exploration of Chekhov's portrayal of health destinations and their significance in health tourism. Further, by filtering for specific codes, we identified the most repetitive destinations or treatments and generated conclusions about the narrative importance of health tourism in Chekhov's literary works.

Results

Geography of Health Destinations Portrayed in the Literary Works of Anton Chekhov

In the 19th century, when health institutions were not widespread and sufficient, medical knowledge was poorly developed, and treatments were attempted using more traditional and archaic methods (Aksenova et al., 2020). At the end of the century, travelling between destinations to access better health care has become

standard (Afanasyeva et al., 2021). In Chekhov's works, his characters searching for better treatment have travelled to cities within the Russian Empire and European countries such as France, Germany, and Austria-Hungary (Chekhov, 1974–1983). The content analysis of Chekhov's literary works enabled us to present the frequency of mentioning health destinations in Chekhov's works. As a result, Yalta, Samara, Mineralnye Vody, Kislovodsk, and Moscow were most often described in his writings. Figure 1 shows the geography of health destinations in Chekhov's works within the frequency spectrum.

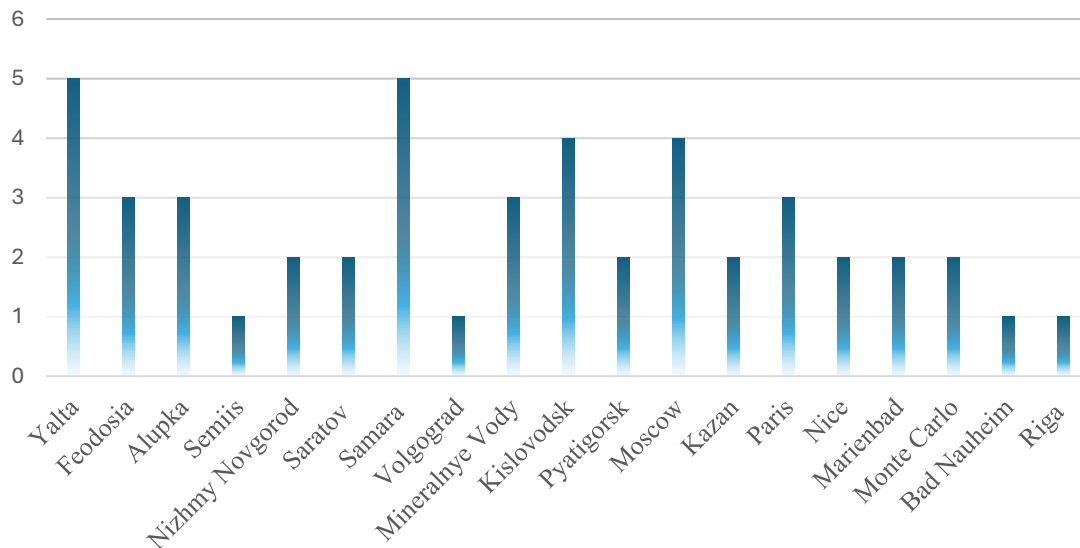


Figure 1. Geography of Health Destinations in Chekhov's Works

Health Tourism Destinations in the Russian Empire

Crimea. Medical tourism has dramatically developed in Russia, especially in the 19th century. Crimea was the primary destination among the centers visited within the Russian Empire's borders to restore good health (Afanasyev, 2015). Chekhov's protagonists started travelling to Crimea for treatment and rehabilitation before he had even visited Crimea himself. The fact that he adopted a slightly sarcastic tone in his early works shows that he did not take Crimea and the treatment available there very seriously or approached the treatment with skepticism. However, his attitude towards Crimea changed over time due to the climatic conditions that would benefit the patients (Lisitsyna, 2018). For the first time, the author travelled to Crimea in 1888 to take advantage of the beautiful climate, and he repeated the visits within the limits of his financial capabilities. Crimea as a health tourism destination is referred to in the following works: *A Living Chattel* (1882), *In March. In April. In May. In June and July. In August: (Philological Notes)* (1885), *Excellent People* (1886), *An Actor's End* (1886), *Ivanoff* (1887), *At the Zelenin's* (late 1880s – early 1990s), *The Boring Story* (1889), *The*

Black Monk (1893), The Helpmate (1895), Ionych (1898), About Love (1898) and The Lady with the Dog (1899). Chekhov, who knew Crimea well and gave detailed information about why and for what purpose patients in his works visited the region, included the names of towns such as Yalta, Feodosia, Alupka, and Simeis among the region's settlements.

Crimea was considered an essential health destination for tuberculosis patients. Such patients appear in the play *Ivanoff* and the short stories *Excellent People*, *The Helpmate*, and *At the Zelenins* (Chekhov, 1974–1983). For example, in the short story, *A Living Chattel*, Bugrov's illness is not named, but his symptoms suggest that he has a lung disease. Also, in *Excellent People*, Liadovsky suffered from pneumonia and was treated for some time in Golitsyn Hospital. In the short stories, pulmonary patients travel to Crimea, usually on a physician's recommendation. At the same time, for Chekhov, Crimea was not only a place for lung diseases but also for rehabilitation and mental illness. In the short story *About Love Anna Alekseyevna*, who has been neurotic because of years of suppressed love, travels to Crimea on the advice of physicians. In *The Boring Story*, Katya, a young girl who suffers from severe psychological trauma and attempts suicide, is sent to Crimea by physicians. Interestingly, some of Chekhov's protagonists, who want to brighten up their tedious lives, can easily use an illness as an excuse for travelling. In *The Lady with the Dog*, Anna Sergeyevna, a young woman repulsed by her husband and wanting to experience a new life, lies to her husband that she is sick so she can go to Crimea.

Volga Region. Many different treatment methods were used for the cure of tuberculosis in Russia. Kumis was one of them. Chekhov also believed in kumis treatment and described it in his works and letters. Thus, in a letter he wrote to his friend Nikolay Yezhov for his wife, who had pleuritis, he recommended she go to the Kumis center (Chekhov, 1974–1983). Chekhov himself, who was diagnosed with tuberculosis, wrote in his letters that he would be sent to the Kumis center by doctors (Chekhov, 1974–1983). Kumi's treatment was mentioned in the stories *Late-Blooming Flowers*, 26 (*Notes from the Diary*), and *The Bride*. In all three stories, the Volga region is associated with treating lung ailments. For example, in *Late-Blooming Flowers*, the doctor who diagnosed the tuberculosis in his former patient, Marusya Priklonskaya, recommended that he should undergo the kumis treatment in Samara. Sasha, the protagonist of *The Bride*, neglected his health and was late for treatment. Even though he went to the Volga, was treated with kumis, and said that his trip was very beneficial, he died in a hospital in Saratov. In story 26 (*Notes from the Diary*), the young woman uses the excuse of health to entertain herself: she lies to her husband about going to Samara to get her lung healed.

Caucasus. At the end of the 19th century, Mineral Vody, located in the North Caucasus, was considered the best health center in Russia (Zolnikova, 2013). Chekhov first came to the Caucasus in 1888 (Molchanova, 2023). Although the Caucasus is also included in Chekhov's stories, such as *A Living Chattel* and *The Philanthropist*, which he wrote before he was in the Caucasus, the treatment of a particular disease group is not mentioned. In the story *A Living Chattel*, Bugrov is forced to make a convincing lie to his father, the priest, who will visit him. He says that his wife is sick and went to the Caucasus for treatment. The story *The Philanthropist* is about a young woman from high society who does not have a disease and a doctor who has a romantic relationship with her. The doctor, who wants to get rid of the young woman, advises her to rest in the Caucasus.

Moscow. In the story, *The Lady with the Dog*, Anna Sergeyevna again lies to her husband to meet Dmitriy Gurov, whom she fell in love with and had a short affair with while in Crimea (Glushkova & Vasilevich, 2022). Anna Sergeyevna visits Moscow, where Gurov lives, every 2-3 months. She tells her husband that she visits a Moscow professor for advice on her gynecological disease. In *Three Years*, a surgeon was called from Moscow for a female cancer patient because none of the local doctors were willing to operate.

Health Destinations in Europe

France. Two French cities are essential to solving health problems. One is Paris, famous for treating rabies, and the other is the French Riviera, which is visited for treating and rehabilitating tuberculosis. In his correspondence and literary works, Anton Chekhov often portrayed Paris not only as a vibrant cultural hub but also as a significant health destination, particularly in the context of medical treatment (Chekhov, 1974–1983). Chekhov recognized the city's advanced medical facilities and reputation as a center for innovative treatments. Notably, during his time, Paris was renowned for treating rabies, with the Pasteur Institute making groundbreaking efforts in preventing and managing the disease (Natesan et al., 2023). Through his letters, Chekhov captured the essence of Paris as a refuge for those seeking relief from illness, enhancing its status as a prominent health tourism locale. Besides, his short story *To Paris* (1886) deals with the subject of rabies satirically. The story tells about the efforts to send people bitten by a dog to Pasteur's clinic to be treated by the county community as if there were no other problems in society and the country.

Anton Chekhov frequently depicted the French Riviera as a desirable health destination, particularly concerning its role in treating tuberculosis (Fisher, 2017). He often emphasized the region's mild climate, beautiful landscapes, and tranquility as

ideal conditions for recovery. The Riviera, with its coastal towns like Nice and Menton, became a popular retreat for those seeking to cope with the symptoms of tuberculosis, benefiting from the fresh air and sunny weather. Chekhov included the city of Nice in his stories (Chekhov, 1974–1983). In *Late-Blooming Flowers*, Dr. Toporkov decides to take Marusya, a tuberculosis patient who falls in love with him, to Southern France, risking spending all his money to save her. Surgeon Nikolai Yevgrafovich, who was diagnosed with tuberculosis in the story *The Helpmate*, was advised to go to Crimea for treatment. However, his wife forces him to go to Nice. Bishop Piotr from *The Bishop* fell ill with an unspecified disease, and doctors advised him to leave everything and go abroad to recover. Piotr indeed left the country and stayed abroad for 8 years. The name of the city where it is located is not given, but we can assume that Nice was where the bishop stayed.

Austro-Hungary. Marienbad (currently Mariánské Lázně) was a city in the Bohemia region of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the late 19th century. Anton Chekhov's descriptions of Marienbad as a health destination primarily emerge from his letters rather than his literary works (Chekhov, 1974–1983). Chekhov reflects on his visits to this picturesque spa town in his correspondence. While not featured explicitly, the themes of health and healing resonate throughout his writings, such as in *The Duel*, where the psychological struggles of the characters appear simultaneously with the therapeutic aspirations to visit health resorts like Marienbad. Chekhov's observations of the town's atmosphere and the people he encounters reveal a profound appreciation for its role as an essential resort, emphasizing the significance of Marienbad in the context of health tourism in the 19th century.

Germany. In Anton Chekhov's works, several German health destinations are mentioned, reflecting the popularity of these locations for health tourism during his time (Chekhov, 1974–1983). Notably, Chekhov referred to Bad Kissingen. He also mentioned Ems, another prominent spa destination recognized for its healing waters. Additionally, Baden-Baden was highlighted in his correspondence and celebrated for its beautiful spas and wellness facilities. Chekhov's *Patriot of His Homeland* begins with the introduction of a small German city where two Russians were treated and named after a famous healing water. This is probably the city of Baden-Baden. The hotel has beautiful scenery, good beer, and pleasant maids. Both patients came here for the treatment of massive abdominal and liver fat.

Therefore, Anton Chekhov's literary works and correspondence illustrate the significance of various health destinations in Russia and abroad as essential for recovery and rejuvenation during the late 19th century. Through his references to locations such as Yalta, Feodosia, Kislovodsk, and the French Riviera, Chekhov not

only highlights the therapeutic qualities of these destinations but also reflects the cultural atmosphere of his time, where health tourism became increasingly popular. His observations and experiences with these destinations reveal a deep understanding of the interplay between physical well-being and the environment, making his writings a rich source of health-seeking journeys. At the same time, it is necessary to analyse the medical practices and experiences of patients and doctors in Chekhov's writing.

Medical Practices and Experiences of Patients and Doctors in Chekhov's Writings

Anton Chekhov frequently incorporated illnesses into his literary works, reflecting his medical background and deep understanding of the human condition (Fisher, 2017). Some scholars prove that storytelling serves therapeutic purposes (Grajo, 2024). This role can also be traced in Chekhov's works devoted to convalescence and emotional introspection. Importantly, Chekhov used physical and psychological ailments as metaphors for social issues, often portraying illness as a reflection of inner turmoil or social decay. His works illustrate how disease affects individuals, their relationships, and their community (Bykova, 2021). Chekhov focused on illness to explore themes of vulnerability, mortality, and the complex emotional lives of his characters, enriching his narratives with realism and empathy (Mangold, 2020). It is worth stating that, in Anton Chekhov's works, the topic of health destinations is closely connected with the illnesses that led characters to seek treatment there. For Chekhov, these destinations often symbolized more than just physical healing; they were places where individuals confronted personal struggles, social isolation, or existential crises (Fisher, 2017). Characters suffering from ailments, whether tuberculosis, nervous exhaustion, or other chronic conditions, frequently travelled to these health resorts, reflecting the belief in such places as cures for both body and mind. Figure 2 enumerates the illnesses mentioned in Chekhov's literary works.

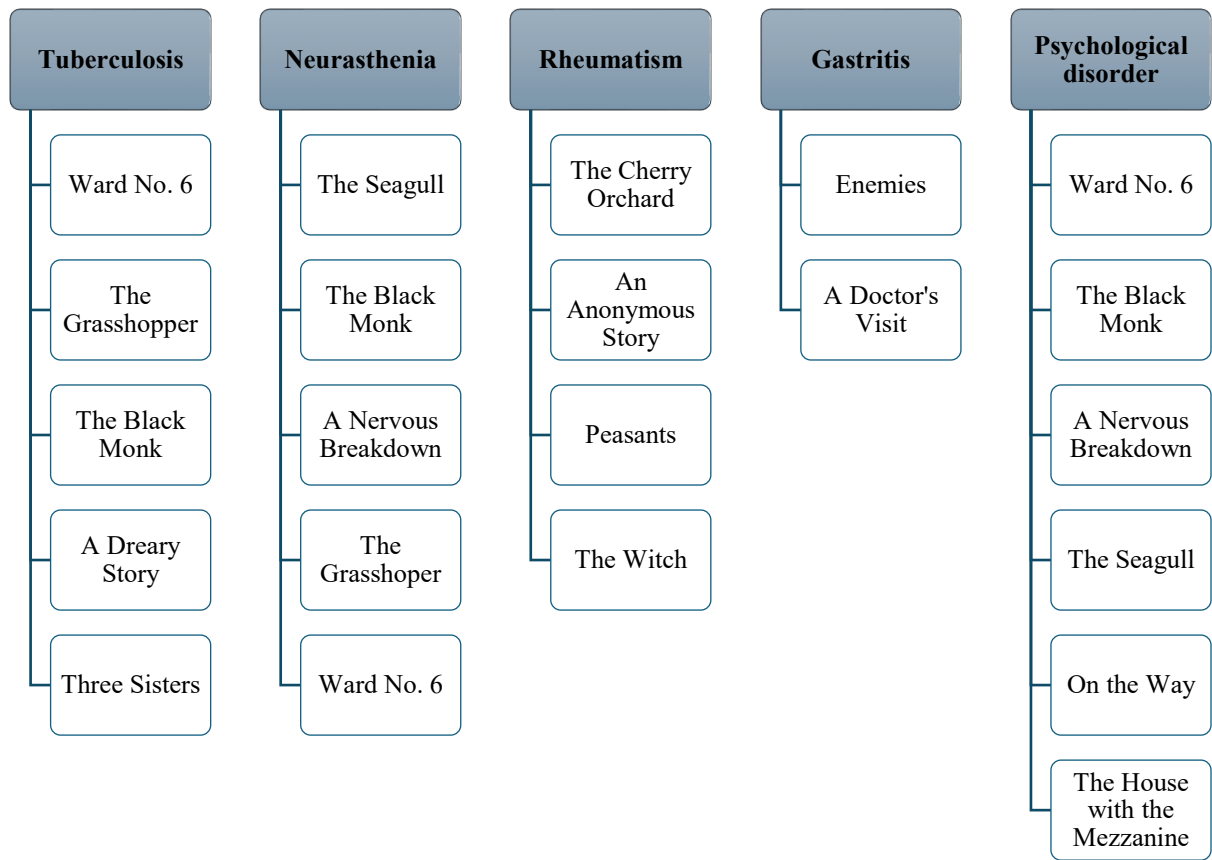


Figure. 2. Illnesses Mentioned in Chekhov's Literary Works

Tuberculosis. Anton Chekhov often represented tuberculosis as the physical suffering of patients and the broader social phenomenon (Chekhov, 1974–1983). In stories like *A Dreary Story* and *The Black Monk*, he depicts characters who suffer from symptoms resembling tuberculosis, showing the slow deterioration of their physical and mental health. Through these portrayals, Chekhov captures the isolation, despair, and uncertainty that were typical of tuberculosis patients, whose treatments were often ineffective and lasted over long periods. The patients in his stories are acutely aware of their mortality, adding a gloomy color to their experiences.

Often, characters travel to sanatoriums or resorts hoping that the fresh air, change of scenery, and better climate will cure them or alleviate their suffering (Fisher, 2017; Honcharova, 2023). In *Three Sisters*, references are made to health retreats as a potential treatment for severe illnesses, highlighting the belief in the healing power of specific destinations. Similarly, in *Ward No. 6*, Chekhov explores the psychological dimension of disease, with characters seeking comfort in different environments to heal both body and mind. While tuberculosis patients often leave for distant places in search of cures, as seen in *The Seagull*, Chekhov frequently questioned the actual

effectiveness of these treatments. The destinations usually serve as a temporary improvement rather than complete healing. This reality is depicted in his stories, offering a painful commentary on medicine and the inevitability of human mortality.

Neurasthenia. According to Chekhov, neurasthenia, a condition associated with nervous exhaustion and mental strain, is portrayed with a deep understanding of its medical and emotional aspects (Valtonen & Lewis, 2023). Anton Chekhov was aware of the prevalence of neurasthenia among the educated and professionals during his time. Characters suffering from this condition in his stories often display symptoms such as anxiety, fatigue, emotional instability, and a sense of hopelessness (Chekhov, 1974–1983). In *A Nervous Breakdown*, for example, the law student Vasilyev experiences a severe mental collapse due to the pressures of his studies and social responsibilities. Chekhov, capturing neurasthenia, shows how it can disrupt a person's life and relationships, leaving them isolated and disillusioned with the world.

Characters visit health resorts, spas, or countryside retreats for rest and recovery. In *The Seagull*, Konstantin Treplev's emotional instability and artistic frustrations are hinted at as possible symptoms of neurasthenia, and his mother suggests that a change of scenery or a retreat might help with his suffering. Similarly, Kovrin travels to the countryside in *The Black Monk*, believing the peace will help calm his troubled mind. However, Chekhov often highlights the limitations of these treatments, suggesting that changing the physical surroundings does not necessarily heal the deeper psychological wounds.

Rheumatism. Anton Chekhov frequently depicts rheumatism as a chronic condition affecting older people (Bykova, 2021). Chekhov understood the persistent pain and discomfort caused by rheumatism, which often limited the mobility of his characters (Chekhov, 1974–1983). In *The Cherry Orchard*, the ageing servant Firs frequently complains of his rheumatism, which reflects both his physical decline and his helplessness in the changing world around him. Besides, the illness is a metaphor for the fading aristocratic way of life. Thus, Firs' suffering illustrates the burdens that come with age and a lack of modern medical treatment. In *An Anonymous Story*, one of the characters suffering from rheumatic pains considers travelling to a warmer climate or visiting a health resort to relieve the symptoms. The idea that bathing in mineral waters or spending time in the mountains could alleviate rheumatic conditions was widespread. Chekhov's characters who undertake such journeys frequently find that while their immediate symptoms might improve, their deeper ailments, both physical and emotional, persist. It is essential to mention that many sought relief through travel to warmer climates or mineral spas. To confirm this belief, Chekhov shows that the cold worsens the character's rheumatism in *The Witch*.

Gastritis. According to Chekhov, characters experiencing gastritis frequently find themselves in health resorts or sanatoriums, seeking relief from their daily lives' symptoms and pressures (Bykova, 2021). In stories such as *The Complaints Book*, Chekhov shows that gastritis causes anxieties and frustrations, particularly in the context of their social environments. In *The Lady with the Dog*, Gurov's trip to Yalta represents an escape from his simple life, where he seeks physical relief from his gastric issues and a sense of emotional fulfilment. The health resort serves as a place for Gurov's transformation as he navigates his relationship with Anna and reevaluates his life choices. Chekhov also emphasizes the medical practices available for treating gastritis. His characters use various diets and medications and experience spa treatments. In *The Duel*, Laevsky's treatment at a health resort does not show the ineffectiveness. As a result, characters are often depicted as disillusioned with the medical interventions they encounter, revealing a tension between the promise of recovery and the reality of their conditions. This critique illustrates the limitations of that period's medical practices and the people's obsession with health and wellness. In *A Dreary Story*, the protagonist's struggles with gastritis demonstrate his internal conflicts and dissatisfaction with his existence. Through these narratives, Chekhov underscores the idea that health is not solely a matter of physical well-being but is deeply connected to emotional and psychological states (Theuriau, 2022).

Psychological Disorders. Anton Chekhov's exploration of psychological disorders in his works often reveals the complicated relationship between mental health and the social context in which his characters live (Sukhostavets, 2022; Theuriau, 2022; Valtonen & Lewis, 2023). Through various narratives, Chekhov shows the experiences of characters suffering from psychological issues, such as anxiety, depression, and neurosis (Chekhov, 1974–1983). In stories like *The Black Monk*, the protagonist Kovrin suffers from delusions and a profound sense of isolation, demonstrating how mental illness can lead to a disconnection from reality and a struggle for identity. In *The Duel*, Laevsky retreats to a health resort in search of improvement from his emotional turmoil and despair. The tranquil environment allows him to confront his inner demons away from the stresses of his everyday life.

Chekhov's characters often encounter various forms of treatment, from traditional therapies to more innovative approaches, revealing the limitations and inadequacies of that time's mental health care system (Fisher, 2017). In *A Dreary Story*, the protagonist's struggles with depression lead him to seek advice from doctors who offer ineffective remedies. In works like *The Lady with the Dog*, Gurov's journey of self-discovery and emotional awakening reveals how the search for mental wellness can be linked with personal relationships and social expectations. Through these

narratives, Chekhov emphasizes that healing often involves opposing one's inner life and connecting with others.

The Role of Health Resorts and Sanatoriums for Chekhov's Characters

In Anton Chekhov's literary works, health resorts and sanatoriums are described as significant settings that facilitate his characters' personal development and psychological journeys (Chekhov, 1974–1983). Moreover, they represent spaces where characters confront their inner struggles, engage in self-reflection, and often experience transformative changes in their lives.

Health resorts and sanatoriums in Chekhov's narratives give characters a break from their everyday lives and allow them to pause and reflect on their circumstances (Fisher, 2017). The environment of these locations often contrasts with the chaos of urban life or personal crises, enabling characters to view their identities and relationships. For instance, in *The Lady with the Dog*, Gurov's trip to Yalta is a turning point in his life. Initially seeking an escape from his boring life and troubled marriage, Gurov undergoes a profound transformation as he connects with Anna. These settings catalyze self-discovery, prompting Gurov to reassess his values and desires.

Besides, the interactions in health resorts often lead to emotional and psychological development (Zakharova, 2024). In *The Black Monk*, the sanatorium setting highlights Kovrin's psychological disorder as he is involved in mental instability. His experiences there force him to confront the duality of his existence as a struggling artist and a man with mental health issues.

Health resorts also serve as spaces where characters confront their mortality and engage in existential reflection (Mangold, 2020). The presence of illness and the possibility of recovery or decline prompt characters to consider their life choices and the inevitability of death. In *The Duel*, Laevsky finds himself at a crossroads in the tranquil surroundings of a health resort. Faced with the consequences of his actions, he must face his fears and insecurities. This leads to critically assessing his relationships and reconsidering his purpose in life.

Moreover, health resorts often symbolize broader social changes and individual discontent (Dahiya, 2022). In works like *The Cherry Orchard*, the declining aristocracy's visits to the estate reflect the shift in social dynamics as characters struggle to lose status. The sanatorium becomes a micro space of social transformation, where characters find their place in a changing world. Chekhov uses these settings to explore nostalgia, loss, and the search for meaning.

Therefore, in Chekhov's literature, health resorts and sanatoriums are not merely places for physical healing but are integral to his characters' personal

development and psychological journeys. Studying the peculiarities of his discourse on medicine and health issues is essential to analyzing health tourism through Anton Chekhov’s literary works.

Discussions

Anton Chekhov’s literary discourse is characterized by a distinctive blend of realism, psychological depth, and subtlety, creating a unique narrative voice transcending mere storytelling (Jacob, 2020). His works delve into the complexities of human emotions and social dynamics, often revealing his characters’ ordinary lives and struggles with health and personal issues (Dahiya, 2022). Chekhov employs a minimalist style, allowing readers to engage with the text more profoundly as his characters solve existential dilemmas and meet social expectations. His use of humor and irony emphasizes the absurdities of life, encouraging readers to reflect on the contradictions in the human experience (Jha, 2020). Table 2 analyzes the peculiarities of Chekhov’s literary discourse and the purpose of using various literary instruments.

Table 2. The peculiarities of Chekhov’s literary discourse

The discourse peculiarity	Examples of literary works	The purpose
Realism and psychological depth	The Lady with the Dog	1) reflecting the complexities of life with honesty;
	The Complaints Book	2) emphasising the painful realities faced by individuals;
	The Cherry Orchard	3) capturing characters’ experiences related to health issues;
	The Black Monk A Dreary Story	4) humanising characters through illnesses.
Subtlety and ambiguity	The Complaints Book	1) showing deeper emotional issues;
	The Lady with the Dog	2) reflecting the multi-faceted nature of human health and experience;
		3) encouraging readers to contemplate their understanding of health, happiness, and the human condition.
Focus on ordinary life and Social Issues	The Lady with the Dog	1) provide intimate glimpses into the lives of ordinary characters dealing with typical struggles;
	The Complaints Book	2) portraying health concerns as integral to their human experience;
	A Dreary Story	
	My Life The Princess	

		3) revealing the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity.
Existential themes	The Lady with the Dog	1) illuminating the complexities of human existence;
	A Dreary Story	2) showing the fragility of life because of health issues;
	Ward No. 6	3) inviting readers to reflect on their own lives.
	The Bet	
Humour and irony	The Steppe	
	The Proposal	1) criticising social norms and the medical profession while addressing health issues;
	The Bear	
	A Joke	2) encouraging empathy and awareness of the social pressures;
	The Doctor	3) illustrating the disconnect between medical practice and the realities of patient experiences.
	The Wedding	

Firstly, Anton Chekhov masterfully employs realism and psychological depth in his works, particularly when exploring themes related to medicine, health issues, and health tourism (Dahiya, 2022; Kayaalti, 2022; Zare et al., 2019). For instance, in *The Complaints Book*, Chekhov highlights the absurdities of the healthcare system through a doctor’s frustrated attempts to navigate bureaucratic obstacles. At the same time, the characters’ experiences reflect broader societal issues surrounding patient care. Similarly, in *The Cherry Orchard*, the family’s financial decline and the associated stress demonstrate the connection between mental health and socio-economic status. Chekhov’s portrayal of health tourism is exemplified in *The Lady with the Dog*, where characters seek healing in the seaside town of Yalta, demonstrating how travel serves as a means of physical and emotional improvement.

Secondly, subtlety and ambiguity enhance the complexity of Chekhov’s writings (Jacob, 2020). His characters often face physical ailments that reflect deeper emotional and psychological struggles, yet Chekhov rarely provides clear resolutions or explicit explanations (Zala & Pandya, 2024). For example, in *The Lady with the Dog*, Gurov suffers from existential dissatisfaction, and his affair with Anna serves as an escape from his boring life and highlights emotional and physical healing. Similarly, in *The Complaints Book*, the interactions between patients and doctors are based on unspoken tensions and unfulfilled desires, exposing the inadequacies of the existing healthcare system. The ambiguity surrounding the characters’ health conditions often demonstrates their inner conflicts. It suggests that the authentic sources of their

ailments lie in their social circumstances or psychological states rather than physical causes (Bykova, 2021).

Thirdly, focusing on ordinary life and social issues is a defining feature of Chekhov's literary works (Dahiya, 2022). The writer often depicts characters who navigate the complexities of their everyday lives, highlighting the interplay between personal struggles and social expectations (Chekhov, 1974–1983). In *The Complaints Book*, for instance, the interactions between patients and healthcare providers reflect the frustrations of navigating a bureaucratic medical system. Chekhov's portrayal of Masha in *The Three Sisters*, who longs for a life beyond their provincial existence while dealing with the realities of health and emotional dissatisfaction, stresses the impact of social problems on personal well-being. Therefore, through these works, Chekhov shows the essence of human experience and illustrates the effect of health issues on the fabric of everyday life.

Fourthly, existential themes spread extensively through Anton Chekhov's works (Khan et al., 2023). In *A Joke*, Chekhov explores the absurdity of human interactions and the transient nature of happiness, suggesting that even frivolity can mask more profound existential angst. At the same time, *The Cherry Orchard* embodies the tension between nostalgia and the inevitability of change, prompting characters to realize their mortality as they face the loss of their family estate. In *The Seagull*, the characters' quests for artistic and personal fulfilment reveal the existential conflicts arising from unfulfilled aspirations. *Gooseberries* portray the protagonist's reflection on a life spent in pursuit of comfort, leading to an existential crisis upon realizing the emptiness of his achievements. Besides, *The Kiss* presents the temporary love and the impact of chance on a person's life. Therefore, by using existential themes, Chekhov invites readers to analyze the complexities of human experience, paying attention to health, identity, and the search for purpose in times of uncertainty.

Moreover, humor and irony are used to illuminate the absurdities of life, particularly concerning medicine, health issues, and health tourism (Kubasov, 2023; Qodirova, 2021). Chekhov's comedic attitudes often specify characters' serious health concerns, creating rich irony that focuses on criticizing societal norms (Bykova, 2021). For example, *The Funeral* uses humor to examine the triviality of social rituals, as characters engaged in a funeral lament. In *The Complaints Book*, the humor in the encounters between a doctor and patients emphasizes the disconnect between medical practitioners and those they serve. Moreover, Chekhov's humor and irony often underline the inadequacies and contradictions within the medical field. Thus, in *The Cherry Orchard*, the characters' preoccupation with their declining estate demonstrates their inability to confront their personal and health issues. *The Three*

Sisters features a similar irony, where the sisters dream of escape from their stagnant lives. The Seagull presents the character Treplev, whose artistic ambitions and existential crises are met with the trivial pursuits of those around him. Interestingly, The Pet Chinchilla shows the absurdity of human desires through the lens of a pet's health issues. At the same time, A Joke finds the humor in human interactions with the more profound existential dilemmas. Ultimately, it is necessary to state that Chekhov's masterful blend of humor and irony not only entertains but also helps readers reflect on the complexities of health, society, and the human condition (Kubasov, 2023).

Therefore, Anton Chekhov's representation of health tourism in his literary works reflects a deep understanding of the relationship between physical illnesses and the human experience. Chekhov shows the broader social issues surrounding health and well-being through his characters' journeys to health resorts and interactions with medical practices. Moreover, he can demonstrate the ironic and humorous aspects of seeking treatment. His literature discourse offers valuable information about his time's cultural attitudes toward health and illness.

Conclusions

The findings showed that many authors have focused on the themes of health, medicine, and the lives of doctors, often reflecting the socio-cultural and personal implications of these topics. Anton Chekhov, well-known as a writer and a practicing physician, paid particular attention to health issues in his literary works because of his deep understanding of human suffering, illness, and the fragility of life. His declining health forced him to seek refuge in warmer climates, including extended stays in health resorts and sanatoriums, which provided him with temporary relief and inspired some of the poignant settings in his writing.

The content analysis of Chekhov's literary works enabled us to present the frequency of mentioning health destinations in Chekhov's works. As a result, Yalta, Samara, Mineralnye Vody, Kislovodsk, and Moscow were most often described in his writings. Special attention was paid to describing health destinations outside Russia, such as Paris, Nice, Marienbad, and Baden-Baden. It was found that Anton Chekhov's literary works and correspondence illustrate the significance of various health destinations as essential places for recovery and rejuvenation during the late 19th century. Through his references to health resorts, Chekhov highlights the therapeutic qualities of these destinations and reflects the cultural atmosphere of his time, when health tourism became increasingly popular. His observations and experiences with these destinations reveal a deep understanding of the interplay between physical well-being and the environment, making his writings a rich source of health-seeking journeys.

Besides, Anton Chekhov frequently incorporated illnesses into his literary works, reflecting his medical background and deep understanding of the human condition. Importantly, Chekhov used physical and psychological ailments as metaphors for social issues, often portraying illness as a reflection of inner turmoil or social decay. His works illustrate how disease affects individuals, their relationships, and their community. He focused on illness to explore themes of vulnerability, mortality, and the complex emotional lives of his characters, enriching his narratives with realism and empathy. The findings enabled us to enumerate the illnesses mentioned in Chekhov's literary works. They included tuberculosis, neurasthenia, rheumatism, gastritis, and various physiological disorders, particularly depression and anxiety.

During the research, we concentrated on Anton Chekhov's literary discourse, characterized by a distinctive blend of realism, psychological depth, and subtlety, collectively creating a unique narrative voice transcending mere storytelling. His works show the complexities of human emotions and social dynamics, often revealing his characters' ordinary lives and struggles with health and personal issues. It was proved that Chekhov employs a minimalist style, allowing readers to engage with the text on a deeper level as his characters solve existential dilemmas and meet social expectations. Besides, his use of humor and irony emphasizes the absurdities of life, encouraging readers to reflect on the contradictions in the human experience.

The research offers a social and literary analysis of health tourism during Chekhov's era. His characters often sought improvement in sanatoriums and healing resorts, highlighting the growing belief in the restorative power of nature and travel. These findings can be used to trace the history of this phenomenon between the late 19th and early 20th century and are valuable for historians, literature experts, and medical scholars. Additionally, Chekhov's literary representations reflect historical attitudes and provide a foundation for understanding the continuing appeal of wellness travel today. Therefore, the analysis of Chekhov's works sheds light on how literary narratives influence social views on health, leisure, and self-care, as well as the development of medical tourism as an industry. This historical perspective through literature offers unique information for scholars exploring the ongoing evolution of health and wellness tourism.

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