Pharmacy planning for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games

In less than two years, London will host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. In this article, Frances Akinwunmi provides an update on pharmacy planning for the games and describes the massive recruitment phase that is about to get under way.

Since early 2009, under the leadership of Mark Stuart, London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic pharmacy clinical lead, the Olympic and Paralympic Pharmacy Clinical Services Group has been tackling the mammoth task of delivering pharmacy services across three Olympic villages, 35 games venues and five football cities in the run up to, and during, the games (PJ, 17 October 2009, p418).

During games time, comprehensive high quality healthcare services will be available to approximately 250,000 accredited people (including elite athletes) and approximately nine million spectators at all Olympic and Paralympic venues. The pharmacy team will soon expand to nearly 130 people to deliver the pharmacy operations during 2012.

Formulary development
The London 2012 Formulary is in the final stages of development. David Erskine is coordinating the development of the Olympic and Paralympic Games Formulary, reviewing and compiling approximately 250 drugs for inclusion. The London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (LOCOG) pharmacy team is collaborating with the British National Formulary to produce the content of the medicines guide, and the consultation for the drug lists has involved experts on sports medicines, including the specific requirements of Paralympic athletes.

The games take place during Ramadan, therefore, Muslim medical advisers have also been consulted to consider the specific requirements of Muslim participants during this period.

Polyclinic pharmacy
Simon Readly, principal pharmacist at University College London Hospitals, has been advising the LOCOG architects on the most appropriate design of the main pharmacy in the Olympic Village polyclinic in Stratford. The aim is to create a pharmacy that facilitates optimal workflow and showcase the best of UK pharmacy practice.

The pharmacy staff will have access to private consultation space and the design will also take into account the needs of Paralympic athletes. During the games, the pharmacy will serve the athletes, officials and their family members. The pharmacy team is developing a unique and comprehensive set of procedures to cover the dispensing of medicines to...
athletes to comply with the rules of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA).

Risk management and systems
Under the guidance of Margaret Hagan, the LOCOG pharmacy team is reviewing potential risks that may be encountered during 2012, and is contributing to a clinical risk management strategy. This involves consideration of the medicine needs of potential risks, such as the outbreak of a contagious disease or other public health concerns during 2012.

The LOCOG pharmacy team is currently working on the design of an efficient system for prescribing and managing clinical records to improve the interface between pharmacy and the other multidisciplinary healthcare specialties operating in the polyclinic. The system will ensure that prescriptions are completed in a timely manner, with a reduced risk of errors, and attention to the status of drugs in sport. At past games, all medicines supplied in the Olympic pharmacies are dispensed against a prescription. For 2012, a minor ailments service will be available from the pharmacy to non-athlete residents of the Olympic Village. The service, designed by Trudy Thomas, will involve assessment of patients for minor conditions and supply of medicines and counselling from the pharmacy team. Delivery of this service will reduce the number of medical encounters with non-athletes, which will free doctors’ time to focus on athlete medical care.

Medicines importation advice
Despite access to medicines via the polyclinic and venue medical rooms, most teams will bring some supply of medicines into the UK for use during the games. In collaboration with the Home Office, the Government Olympic Executive, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and the Veterinary Medicines Directorate, I have led the development of specific guidance for visiting teams relating to the import, export and general use of medicines during the games. In the months leading up to the games, the guidance will be revised and updated pending changes to legislation.

Venue drugs management
Working out the logistical demands of managing drug delivery, stock control and associated record keeping across some 40 venues is a unique challenge. This will be done under the guidance of Steve Simbler. At each venue, there will be two types of medical rooms holding stock drugs: one for athletes and one for spectators. In addition, there will be a number of mobile drug kits and variations on emergency drug packs requiring monitored replenishment.

Different venues will require different quantities and types of medicines. For instance, venues hosting potentially high trauma sports, such as the equestrian events and road cycling, will require specific access to emergency medicines during the competition period.

Pharmacy education
The role of pharmacy in sports and exercise medicine is a relatively new discipline. Pharmacy education will be a key component to ensure that all pharmacy staff have the necessary knowledge and skills to support the specific needs of athletes during the games.

David Mottram and Mrs Thomas are leading the production of a pharmacy educational package in collaboration with the Centre for Postgraduate Pharmacy Education (CPPE). All games-time pharmacy volunteers will be required to complete the education pack before they start.

Topics covered in the training package include: the WADA prohibited list, drug testing, drugs and substances commonly used by athletes, and pharmacists as advisers on medicines use in sport and exercise. It is expected that the CPPE package will be available as an online module from June 2011.

The package will also be made available to other healthcare professionals involved in the games.

As a legacy of London 2012, the training package will also be available to all UK pharmacy staff.

It is hoped that the programme will increase the recognition of the important advisory role that pharmacy can play in both competitive and non-competitive sports, as well as in exercise.

What next?
Over the following months, LOCOG pharmacy services will be recruiting over 100 pharmacy “games makers” who, together with the group, will share the responsibility of delivering a world-class pharmacy service across the three polyclinic pharmacies in Stratford, Weymouth and Eton Dorney.