Pharmacy planning gains momentum for the Olympic and Paralympic Games

In this article, David Mottram and Mark Stuart provide the latest update on pharmacy preparations for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The Olympic and Paralympic Pharmacy Clinical Services Group (PCSG) is one of the five medical services workstreams within the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG). The goal of the PCSG is to provide comprehensive pharmacy services for all who will be attending the Olympic and Paralympic Games in London in 2012, whether they come as a competing athlete, official, workforce volunteer or spectator.

During the period between July and September 2012, the Olympics will last for 17 days and the Paralympics for 11 days with additional build-up, transition and post-games periods when medical services will be provided. Pharmacy clinical services will accommodate 26 Olympic sports, with around 11,200 athletes from 205 countries competing in 34 venues, followed by 20 Paralympic sports, with around 4,200 athletes from 147 countries competing at 21 venues. An estimated 9.2 million spectators will attend the games.

Services will be co-ordinated through pharmacies located at the three polyclinics being built for the games. These are based at the Olympic villages in Stratford (Olympic Park), Weymouth (sailing events) and Eton Dorney (rowing events). The pharmacies will operate in a similar style to an outpatient dispensary and will be the co-ordinating points of medicines supply for the athlete and spectator medical facilities at all Olympic venues, including the five cities hosting the preliminary Olympic football matches.

A specific Olympic formulary will be used for prescribing within the Olympic environment. A medicines information service will be provided from the Stratford pharmacy. In addition to catering to the specialist medicine requirements of elite athletes, pharmacy staff will also be involved in providing information to athletes about drugs restricted in sport within the guidelines of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA).

The PCSG began its work in April 2009 and has focused on a number of key areas: establishment of the polyclinic pharmacies; development of the games formulary; recruitment of expert pharmacist and pharmacy technician volunteers for the period of the games; and education and training programmes.

Polyclinic pharmacies

Extensive discussions have taken place with the architects responsible for the games polyclinics and appropriate allocation of space for the pharmacies has been agreed. Work continues to procure the necessary equipment and materials to run the pharmacies. Currently, the LOCOG team is in the process of selecting suppliers for the provision of drugs, dispensing and stock management systems and consumables for the three polyclinic pharmacies. Comprehensive standard operating procedures are in the process of being written to cover all aspects of pharmacy services, including the logistics of transporting medicines between sites during the games.

Development of the games formulary

The PCSG has taken the lead in the development of the games formulary in close collaboration with colleagues in other LOCOG medical workstream groups. The formulary is based on those used in recent summer and winter Olympics, but with particular reference to medicines available in the UK. Some discussions with other medical
services colleagues have centred on medicines required for emergency drugs supplies for all games venues.

The British National Formulary is providing the clinical drug information content for the London 2012 Games, including the content of the games formulary. Hundreds of copies of the BNF are being donated by Pharmaceutical Press for use by both local and international doctors and will be available in all the clinical areas of the games, including each of the 35 venues and each of the three Olympic Villages. MedicinesComplete will also be available as a primary reference source for use by all 3,500 staff of the medical team for the games.

Recruitment of volunteers
Around 130 volunteers (pharmacists and pharmacy technicians) will be required to staff the three polyclinics over the period of the games. This is based on an expectation that each volunteer will commit to 10 sessions each (a session being an eight-hour shift). In September 2010, LOCOG launched a national campaign to recruit volunteers for the games (PJ, 18 September 2010, p309). Over 1,200 pharmacists and pharmacy technicians expressed interest in becoming volunteers. Interviews for those short-listed will take place later in 2011.

Education and training programmes
An education and training policy document is being developed to reflect the requirement for the education and information needs of healthcare volunteers who will be using the pharmacies at the games venues. It was also decided that an education programme on drugs in sport and exercise would be of interest to pharmacists and technicians nationally. Consequently, in collaboration with the Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education (CPPE), an e-learning programme will be published on this subject. This programme will be completed by June 2011 when it will be made available through the CPPE.

The pharmacists and pharmacy technicians who will be appointed as volunteers at the games polyclinics will be required to undertake this e-learning programme and to complete the assessment associated with the programme successfully.

The PCSG will continue to strive to ensure that the pharmacy clinical services for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games will showcase the best of the UK pharmacy profession.

Already, a solid legacy is emerging for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians in the field of sport and exercise medicine.