

Going for gold with world-class medical care

The Olympic Games is a festival of physicality, where the superhuman feats of thousands of athletes are a source of awe for billions of mortals spectating from couches around the world. Behind those peak performances are hundreds of doctors, physios, massage therapists, dietitians, conditioning coaches and others. And behind them is the Olympic Games Polyclinic, the purpose-built, latest-and-greatest medical centre.



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Dr Richard Budgett is an Olympic gold-medallist and sport-medicine specialist who has, since 1992, held various senior medical roles at both the summer and winter Olympic Games. He won gold at the Los Angeles 1984 Olympic Games, as a member of Great Britain's coxed-four rowing team. By the time the London 2012 Olympic Games were in play, he was chief medical officer. Today, Budgett is the IOC's medical and scientific director.

Clear scans, full service, can't lose

"I always say that the medical facility is the jewel in the crown of medical provision at the Olympic Games. It can deal with anything that doesn't require going to hospital for an operation. The investigation facility — with the ability to make fast, accurate diagnosis — is really important. There's scanning, MRI and CT scanning, X-ray, ultrasound, all of which are aimed at making a diagnosis quickly so you can competently treat athletes as fast as possible and get them back on the field to play," says Budgett.

"Nowadays sports medicine requires a team comprising a doctor, physiotherapists, massage therapists; and a number of specialists such as orthopaedic surgeons and physicians. We also have to provide ophthalmology, dental; and pharmacy services.

The vibe inside

"There's a real buzz of intellectual activity around the most fantastic equipment and kit and you've got some of the best medical professionals from around the world volunteering to be part of this. So there's a great opportunity for continuous professional development, learning and experience."

Surround ultrasound

Increasingly sports medicine uses ultrasound scans as a primary diagnostic tool for musculoskeletal consultations. Doctors who treat athletes have a degree of expertise in using ultrasound, literally at the bedside. If the injury is more complicated, there are specialist radiologists on hand who may use the larger, more sophisticated ultrasounds that are available or turn to MRI or other modalities, such as CT or X-ray.

Pain points

“When you look at the statistics of sports injuries the most commonly hurt body part, across all sports, is the knee. So naturally that's reflected in the imaging. There's quite a lot of backs as well, but it depends on the sport. I'm an old rower, so I know that rowers can suffer from problems with their backs. It depends what sport you're in and injuries are often very sport-specific,” explains Budgett.

At the London 2012 Olympic Games, 1,711 scans (X-ray, CT, MRI and ultrasound) were performed and 655 scans were performed during the Paralympic Games. The final statistics show that the part of the body most examined was the knee (16,9% of all scans), followed by the spine (13,2%) and the shoulders and clavicles (7,7%).

Up all night

“The polyclinic runs 24/7 throughout the games. During the small hours, it's only supposed to be an emergency service, with closing time at 11, but it's not unusual for an athlete to come in late from a venue and to get scanning or another sort of emergency treatment done, even if it's one o'clock in the morning,” he says.

All the digital-imaging medical equipment used will be donated to hospitals in Brazil after the closing ceremony of the Paralympic Games.

Source: [AllAfrica](#)

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