



Sexual health, HIV and the 2012 Olympics

The Olympic Games poses opportunities and challenges for Sexual Health in London and other host cities, not just for the local populations and visitors but also for the athletes.

Some host cities (Seoul and Sydney) witnessed an increase in international visitors in the Olympic year, whereas previous European host cities (Barcelona and Athens) witnessed a decrease in visitors in the Olympic year.

Indirect evidence from accommodation occupancy rates shows significant peaks around the Olympics and Paralympics, suggesting a high influx of visitors during the Olympic period however, the period immediately before and after the event saw a drop in visitors.



Photography - harshilshah

So what is the likely impact of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and sexual health issues during the Olympic and Paralympics Games?

The truth is there is limited published data on the impact of STIs during the Olympic and the Paralympic Games. However, we do know the number of condoms provided to athletes during the past three Olympic Games (around 8 condoms in Sydney in 2000, around 8 in Athens in 2004 and around 6 in Beijing 2008).

In Sydney, authorities initially distributed 70,000 condoms to athletes but an additional 20,000 were ordered to meet demand. Around 10,000 commercial sex workers were operating at the time of the Games as Commercial sex work was legalised in 1995. In fact, sex workers were recruited from abroad to meet the expected surge. Importantly, the Australian government contributed public money to fund sex education to sex workers.

300,000 condoms were distributed in 90,000 rooms in 424 hotels (3 stars or more) for the Beijing Olympic Games and other key work included a collaboration between Olympic organisers, UNAIDS and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to promote an HIV/AIDS Awareness Toolkit which provided material on HIV/AIDS education to members of the Olympic Movement and to the wider sporting community.

The IOC encourages involvement of high-profile HIV positive sports personalities to de-stigmatise HIV/AIDS and advocates inclusion of HIV positive sportsmen and women as there are no valid reports of HIV transmission in sports settings.

Hepatitis B Virus

The Hepatitis B Virus (HBV) is more stable in the public environment with the risk of transmission 50-100 times higher than HIV transmission in sport settings. HIVsport would therefore recommend that a Hepatitis B (Hep B) vaccination is offered to:

- Non-infected athletes from endemic areas
- Athletes who regularly visit endemic areas
- Athletes who practise first aid in absence of healthcare providers
- Athletes suspected of doping
- Athletes involved in contact or collision sports