

The XVII Commonwealth Games: (1)

An insight into pharmacy preparations

With only days until the opening ceremony of the XVII Commonwealth Games, the highlight of the Queen's Golden Jubilee celebrations, excitement is mounting. Around 5,000 athletes from 72 countries will converge on Manchester to compete from 25 July to 4 August. Mark Stuart, superintendent pharmacist of the Athletes' Village Medical Centre Pharmacy, gives an insight into the pharmacy preparations

OVER the past year and a half a dedicated pharmacy working group, consisting of pharmacist representatives from National Health Service trusts in the Greater Manchester area and a number of pharmacists involved in sports medicine, has been meeting monthly.

The pharmacy working group has constructed policies and procedures, and developed the services that the pharmacy will provide for the XVII Commonwealth Games, the largest sporting event ever held in the United Kingdom. And they have tried to anticipate the many unique issues that an event of this type will present.

The University of Manchester Fallowfield campus student accommodation will be transformed into the Commonwealth Games village, and the pharmacy will be part of a purpose built polyclinic in the heart of the village.

A team of 16 volunteer pharmacists from all over the UK has been selected to run the pharmacy from the time the village opens on 15 July, until the close of the village on 7 August. An interest in sports medicine and availability for the games period were part of the selection criteria. The volunteers will be provided with an official games uniform and will receive free meals and transport while they are working.

The pharmacists have had the opportunity to attend a number of training days to prepare them for the event. Training has covered issues specific to working in a games environment. Topics included substances prohibited in sport, doping control, dealing with the media, confidentiality, security in the athletes' village, radio communication and professional interaction with the athletes. Volunteers recently attended a pharmacy specific training day at the village where they had the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the new Village Medical Centre and inspect the facilities before opening day.

The patients in the village will include elite athletes of many nationalities and cultures. The pharmacy will act as the distribution point for drugs needed by doctors at 15 venues around Manchester including the new 38,000 seat City of Manchester Stadium and will vigilantly monitor athletes' medication according to international anti-doping laws. A custom-designed dispensing program will alert the pharmacist, at the time of dispensing, to the status of a drug in relation to sporting law. All medicines, including over-the-counter drugs, will be dispensed only on prescription, further reducing the risk of ath-

letes taking a prohibited substance.

The pharmacy team will ensure that athletes' drug treatment complies with the Olympic Movement Anti-Doping Code. This is the internationally recognised list of substances that are prohibited, or have restrictions, when used by competing athletes. The list of prohibited substances includes stimulants, narcotics, anabolic agents, diuretics and peptide hormones. Substances prohibited in certain circumstances include alcohol, cannabinoids, local anaesthetics, glucocorticosteroids, and beta-blockers.

Pharmacists will also be monitoring the route of drug administration in order to comply with this code. For example, glucocorticosteroids are permitted only when used locally or intra-articularly when medically necessary. The use of formulations that result in systemic absorption, such as oral or rectal preparations, or intravenous or intramuscular injections, are prohibited. Likewise, only local or intra-articular injections of local anaesthetics can be administered when medically justified.

The pharmacy working group has produced a formulary specifically for the games. It reflects the requirements of sports medicine and the necessary medical care for athletes, officials and staff. A wide range of anti-inflammatory drugs has been included and these are expected to be frequently prescribed, as at previous games. There will be a dense population in the village, so having a broad spectrum of anti-infective medicines on the formulary is important given the potential infection control issues that this situation might present.

The formulary lists the status of each drug according to the anti-doping code and requirements for notification before competition should this be necessary. For example, an athlete can use salbutamol, which falls into the stimulant category, only if he or she has proven asthma or exercise-induced asthma. Written notification by the team doctor is necessary before the athlete competes. A similar situation exists for insulin, which is permitted only to treat athletes with insulin-dependent diabetes.

The whole spectrum of medical services will unite to provide the highest standard of health care to the athletes, team officials, and support crew. Those volunteering their services include sports doctors, dentists, podiatrists, pharmacists, physiotherapists, optometrists and nurses.

In addition, a drugs-in-sport information pack has been sent to pharmacies near the village, NHS emergency departments, and

pharmacies at Manchester airport. These are most likely to come into contact with athletes requiring medicines around the time of the games. The pack contains information on what athletes may and may not take according to the anti-doping code. It is hoped the packs will prevent athletes from inadvertently taking prohibited substances, particularly those found in OTC preparations.

A number of drug companies have shown their support for the games. Bayer, Castlemead, Crookes Healthcare, Schering Plough and Shire Pharmaceuticals have generously donated supplies for dispensing from the Village Medical Centre Pharmacy. The National Pharmaceutical Association is subsidising indemnity cover for the volunteer pharmacists and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society has lent essential reference books for the games period.

This is an exciting opportunity for pharmacists to be involved in an international sporting event and to be part of a medical team caring for elite athletes from around the world and helping to maintain a fair sporting environment.