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Olympic Sized Group Health Benefits by Daniel White

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The 2012 Summer Olympic Games will soon be taking place in London, England, with over 10,000 competitors from 204 countries. It is expected that a total of nearly 9 million spectators will be in attendance during the two week span of competition. With so many people in one place, it is essential that the London Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games (LOCOG) stays on top of the health and wellness of everyone involved in the 27th anniversary of the Summer Olympics.

Richard Budgett, Chief Medical Officer for the games, has been organizing medical strategies and forming liaisons with stakeholders for over four years. He is in charge of all healthcare and anti-doping operations for the 2012 Olympics. Along with a team of 10 paid staff, 500 volunteer medical personnel and 80 on-call specialists, Budgett hopes to attend to all athletes and audience members in need of medical care.

There are three polyclinics set up within village grounds, the largest of which is situated in the main Olympic Village. These clinics will provide an array of services to competitors, staff members, and spectators, including surgery, ophthalmology, dentistry, podiatry, and physical therapy. These mini-hospitals have the capacity to treat anything from a broken leg to the common cold. Additionally, there will be a team of paramedics, physiotherapists and specialists at each event to provide immediate care in the field of play when necessary. To provide these medical services and facilities at no cost to the athletes, LOCOG spent approximately $36 million.

In addition to free healthcare provided by London's Olympic committee, the U.S. Olympic team is being provided free health insurance through Highmark, a company that provides health insurance to over 3 million people in Western Pennsylvania. Highmark has been serving U.S. Olympic teams since 2005 and is proud to serve this year's team of about 1,000 participants.

Do you have a question about health insurance policy or healthcare at the Olympic Games? Send us your questions and let us know which Olympic events are your favorite on our Facebook wall and Twitter feed.

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