

## PAN AM PROUD 2! (Winnipeg, 1999) by Dr. Brian S. Seaman, DC, FCCSS(C), FICC

For athletes, there is no greater honour than representing their country. As a chiropractor, there is no greater honour than to be asked to represent your profession. For the sports chiropractor, the proudest moment is when you are asked to not only represent your profession, but also your country at a major international event such as the Pan American Games.

The Pan Am experience for Dr. Gordon Partridge (Winnipeg) and me began in January 1999 when we each received a phone call from Lois Pohlod (physiotherapist; Calgary) who was the Chief Therapist for the Canadian Pan Am team. She announced that we had been selected as the chiropractors for the Canadian Health Team at the 1999 Pan American Games.

Dr. Partridge is the chiropractor for the men's and women's Canadian Volleyball team which are based in Winnipeg. This turned out to be quite an advantage for us as he was very familiar with the injuries and past history of the volleyball teams.

Also significant, was that for first time a member of our profession was named to the Canadian Core Health Team, for a major games event (ie. Olympics, Pan Ams, Commonwealth) without an NSO (National Sports Organization) recommendation.

**ORIENTATION.** The first step for both of us, was to attend a four day orientation in Winnipeg which was scheduled May 13-16, 1999. This was organized by the COA (Canadian Olympic Association), not only for the Core Health Team, but also all the mission staff, coaches and team leaders. The orientation was very enjoyable and provided an excellent opportunity for all the members of the support staff to get to know each other. I roomed with Arel Hamran from Edmonton who is the President of the Canadian Sports Massage Association (CSMA) and has considerable experience with the Canadian swim team.

The first afternoon (13/05/99) the medical team, consisting of 35 health care professionals plus a clinic manager, met. There was a basic introduction to the concept of the core team as well as an opportunity of briefly introducing ourselves to the group. A reception, with all the members of the support staff was scheduled that evening as well. The following day (14/05/99), there was a general session which was addressed by Dr. Alex Carre who was the Chef de Mission of the Canadian Pan Am Team. This was followed by a tour of a number of the competition sites. On Saturday (15/05/99) the mission staff were divided up into groups of approximately 12-15 people. Each group went through eight different situational scenarios which varied, from a doping incident, to a missing athlete, to a noise incident in athletes village, etc. With each of these situations, the facilitators wanted us to think how each of our particular mission group (ie. medical in our case) would react to this (if indeed we were directly involved), or what our general impressions would be. This was an excellent exercise, and not only important as to developing a team concept within the entire mission staff, but also making us more aware of the roles which each of us would play at a major games.

The formal sessions finished off Sunday morning with a brunch with all the mission staff. It was a great series of meetings which were very informative and with the team concept being promoted throughout.

**THE TEAM.** Although we were often referred to as the core "medical" team the team has actually been re-named the core "health" team due to the various health care providers who were participating. For the Pan Am Games, the team eventually consisted of 36 health care professionals as well as a clinic manager. Originally there were six (6) medical physicians (increased to seven (7) a couple of weeks prior to the Games due to multiple event sites and scheduling constraints). This included Dr. Ross Outerbridge who was the CMO (Chief Medical Officer), an orthopedic surgeon from Kamloops, BC and quite a photographer! As well there were 21 therapists (physiotherapists and athletic therapists) including Lois Pohlod who was the Chief Therapist (CT). Some of the therapists were both ATs and PTs. As for the massage therapists, there were six (6).

At the time of the orientation, each member of the health team was provided with a manual, in which was a summary of the qualifications or certifications which are required at major games. For instance, medical doctors require a CASM (Canadian Academy of Sports Medicine) diploma, the sports physiotherapists a Level 3 (now known as a Post Graduate Diploma in Sports Physiotherapy), and the massage therapists a CSMT designation (Certified Sports Massage Therapist).

**OFF TO WINNIPEG.** Before we knew it, the day had arrived to leave for Winnipeg. My day started out with a bang! When I got to the Halifax Airport to pick up my ticket, the locator number was incorrect and they could not find my ticket! Finally, they managed to track it down and I was on my way, along with Karen Decker who is a sports physiotherapist in the Halifax area and the only other member of the health team from Atlantic Canada.

Most of the health team arrived on Saturday, July 17, 1999 to help finish setting up the clinic, and get ready for the arrival of the athletes. Donna Bell, who is the Executive Director of the Sports Medicine Council of Manitoba, was the clinic manager. She did a fantastic job keeping everything organized and all the various health care providers in line. Donna had also been the clinic manager for the Canadian Team at the 1998 Commonwealth Games.

After helping out in clinic, the entire health care team went to "staging" to receive our uniforms and kit bags. While in the athlete village, each of us had to wear at least one part of our Roots apparel along with our accreditation badges. The Roots apparel is quite distinctive and Team Canada certainly stood out in style!

**LET THE GAMES BEGIN.** On July 18th Dr. Partridge and I saw patients for the first time and gradually became busier over the next 2-3 days as more of the teams and athletes arrived in the village. On July 21st there was a reception for the largest Canadian team ever (the athletes totaled approximately 620 along with support staff of over 220!). This was held at Fort Gibraltar in Winnipeg.

Over the first couple of weeks, the temperature was quite hot averaging 32-35 Celsius most days and peaking at 39-40 at times with the humidity. That included opening ceremonies on July 23rd. This was an excellent experience (despite the heat) and the timing of the Snow Birds fly pass, was impeccable. July 24th was the first day of competition. At the end of the day, we were treated in the Canadian Medical Clinic with a visit from Sharon Donnelly who won the Women's triathlon. She brought along her gold medal to show everyone. A beautiful design and surprisingly heavy! Over the course of the Games, this became a common occurrence with the majority of the athletes, who won medals, bringing them into the clinic for everyone to see.

July 31st was our busiest day on top of which, the Steve Vezina story hit the media. As everyone now knows, the roller hockey goalie's blood test was positive for ephedrine, pseudoephedrine and very high levels of steroids (Nandrolone). At his news conference two days later (02/08/99) Vezina claimed that he last used steroids in June 1999.

By August 6th and 7th, the clinic started to slow down for all the health care providers as many of the teams were leaving for other competitions and a few world championships (ie. paddling, rowing, boxing). Closing ceremonies were August 8th which again was a tremendous experience especially with all of us being invited onto the field to get a close up look at "The Guess Who".

**IN RETROSPECT.** Overall, the Pan Am experience was tremendous! Over the 3 weeks Dr. Partridge and I had an excellent time, a very good experience with the athletes, and developed a great rapport with all the other members of the health care team. Both of us enjoyed the multi-disciplinary aspect of the health care team and interprofessional referrals were common. There is no doubt, that with a multi-disciplinary team and especially at a multi-sport event (such as the Olympics, Pan Ams or Commonwealth Games), it is essential that each practitioner (regardless of profession) realizes his/her role as a team player and not be an individualist. Unfortunately certain incidents in the past (some of which are still brought up), have hampered chiropractic's attempts to increase our role in the sports field. Hopefully positive experiences, such as the Pan Am Games, will help to demonstrate that chiropractors are indeed an important part of the "team".

As for the skills required by a chiropractor, one must obviously have good clinical skills and be familiar with, and comfortable treating elite athletes. One must also be able to work with other professionals and not be concerned with an inevitable overlap of skills, or philosophical differences. Clinic protocols are established for reasons. Codes of Conduct and Guidelines have been established by the CCSS(C), and should be followed. Keep in mind, that every health care professional who is a member of the team, is there because of their respective levels of expertise and experience. There was seldom a day which went by, that there was not an exchange of information which in turn benefits not only the health care team but more importantly the athletes. Remember, we are there for the athletes!

It was also an excellent experience to meet and treat many athletes on the Canadian team. There is a wide range of ages competing for Canada, from teenagers, up to the 40's and 50's (depending upon the sport). The athletes have a very positive attitude towards not only their sport, but life in general. Canada is certainly very fortunate to have individuals of this caliber representing our country both here and abroad.

Over the 3 weeks, Dr. Partridge and I were kept busy treating individuals from at least 25 different teams and 21 sports, plus a number of the mission staff. This number does not include Canadian athletes who were treated at the Poly Clinic by the PAGS (Pan American Games Society) chiropractors (organized by Drs. Laurence Schledewitz and Mike Pleushow) or Drs. Greg Stewart (Athletics/Track and Field), Brian Lecker (Rhythmic Gymnastics) and Ken Mikkelson (Swimming) who provided chiropractic care for their respective teams.

Overall, we had an excellent experience and did not encounter any difficulties with any of the health care providers. In particular, we felt that the lines of communication were excellent with all the team members and found working with Dr. Ross Outerbridge (CMO), Lois Pohlod (CT) and Donna Bell (Clinic Manager) to be a very rewarding and positive experience. In our opinion the COA, Lois and Ross did an excellent job putting together such a great health care team. It was certainly an honour to be members of such a fantastic group of professionals.

**AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST, THANK YOU!**

It truly was an honour for us to be asked to represent chiropractic at such an outstanding event! We would like to thank the College of Chiropractic Sports Sciences (Canada) who purchased portable chiropractic tables from Triumph Supplies for us to use in the Canadian medical clinic. Shum Leung (President, Triumph) also arranged to have the Canadian flag and "Team Canada" embroidered into the thoracic piece of the tables. At the end of the Games Dr. Partridge and I donated the tables on behalf of the CCSS(C) to the medical mission equipment of the Canadian Olympic Association for use at future games. Dr. Alex Carre (Chef de Mission) was on hand to accept on behalf of the COA. This was very well received by the COA with a number of their officials and mission staff personally expressing their gratitude.

Dr. Partridge and I would also like to extend our deep felt thanks to those chiropractors who have worked so hard over the years to help develop the profile in the field of athletics and sports injuries. Your efforts were much appreciated not only by us, but most importantly our Canadian athletes!

*Originally published in Chiropractic Business*