

A week at the University Games

Each year, the university 'Olympics' is held in various cities around Australia. This year I was lucky enough to be asked to head the entire medical team for the University of Melbourne at the Australian University Games held on the Gold Coast. I have been a team physiotherapist for Uni Melb since 2002, and over the years the University Games have taken me everywhere except for Darwin.

The event lasts five days, so all of the sports, including track and field, and team and individual events, are crammed into a short time frame. With around 350 athletes, Uni Melb comprised one of the biggest teams. Some of the athletes represent Australia at the very elite level, so it is a great opportunity for young physiotherapists to be exposed to this level of sport.

The medical team

For the number of athletes competing, we took four physiotherapists, two myotherapists and two final-year physiotherapy students. Each sport is divided into precincts and each medical personnel covered their precinct for the full five days. On average, each physiotherapist covered four to five teams per day.

The day began at about 8.00am. The medical team prepped the athletes prior to their sport at the hotel where a seminar room was converted into a huge makeshift clinic. The sporting events finished by about 5.30pm, but our days ended at around 8.00pm after we had seen to all the injuries. Apart from the long days, the conditions could be difficult because we were treating players on courts, on the grounds and sometimes out in the open.

Management staff

Overall, Team Melbourne provided a group of managers who worked with each medical member. These people are crucial: they assist in taking injured athletes to hospitals,



Kusal Goonewardena.

for X-rays, and help medical staff with all their needs. The professionalism and expertise they bring to the games is paramount and truly makes the medical team's job much more worthwhile. Rod Warnecke, who heads the management team, provided us with everything from plane tickets, accommodation, hire cars for travel, food and all medical equipment.

Networking

Working with the team at Uni Melb has opened many doors for me. I was invited to be the physiotherapist for a baseball tour to Taiwan in 2002. I have worked alongside many doctors such as Adam Castricum and Mick Makdissi, who now works for Rugby Australia, Hawthorn Football Club and Swimming Australia. Other treating physiotherapists and myotherapists have worked for Soccer Australia and toured overseas for the World University Games. It's a great learning environment.

Responsibilities

As part of the medical staff caring for the athletes, we not only wear our hats as physiotherapists but we have to be attuned to athletes who have other issues, such as stomach bugs and other infections. Being prepared is the key, and

referring to the team doctor becomes vital. Unlike previous years we did not have a team doctor in 2009 and as Head of Medical, I had to make sure we could contact medical clinics that were either open 24 hours or provided a home visit service to the hotel where all the athletes stayed. It can test you when an athlete has heat stroke or has been vomiting for no apparent reason for 48 hours. Identify, assess and refer. Quickly!

Skills

The work at the University Games has helped me as a physiotherapist. It has improved my assessment, diagnosis and treatment skills because I have to be on my toes: everything is fast-paced. You realise how important your skills are when you can help an athlete get back to

playing after they were limping at the start of the week. It is a great opportunity to see the athletes at the most acute stages and follow them right through to the end stages of their rehab. They often continue to see the physiotherapists back in Melbourne.

The overall highlight is when your team wins gold: they are the number one team in Australia and when they celebrate, you have reason to as well. 'This gold is as much yours as it is ours, Kusal' is probably one of the best things you can hear: it makes all the hard work seem very worthwhile and is excellent reward because you have made a difference.

Kusal Goonewardena

APA Sports Physiotherapist and Director of Vigor Sports Medicine Clinics

NOTICEBOARD

Branch Council resignation

Deb Mitchell has resigned from Branch Council, creating a casual vacancy to be filled early in 2010. Deb joined the APA in 1997 and she joined Branch Council in 2005. Deb has worked hard to further the interests of Vic Branch Members, and her commitment, willingness to help and generous support of the APA will be missed. Thank you, Deb; we wish you well in your endeavours.

Come celebrate the close of 2009

Branch Council cordially invites all members to come celebrate the Branch's achievements for 2009. Join us for End of Year Drinks, 7.00–9.00pm on Thursday 10 December in the APA Theatre, Level 1, 1175 Toorak Road, Camberwell.

Victorian Healthcare Association Scholarships

Applications for Rural Allied Health Undergraduate and Postgraduate Scholarships for 2010 are now open. Applications for Continuing Professional Development for Rural Allied Health Practitioners Subsidy Program are also available. Please visit www.vha.org.au and click on the 'scholarships' tab for more information.

Greetings of the season

Vic Branch staff wish you and your loved ones a safe and happy festive season, and a healthy, productive, prosperous 2010. The Branch office will close at 2.00pm on Thursday 24 December 2009 and re-open on Monday 4 January 2010.

