

Case Study Olympic-sized Polyclinic and Pathology! HORIBA support Spire Healthcare at London 2012



Spire Healthcare's on-going partnership with and use of HORIBA Medical's haematology analysers continues to go from strength to strength, as demonstrated by last summer's London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. During which, the pathology services managed by Spire provided temporary support to and healthcare management of an extremely diverse community the size of a large town!

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Dr Fergus Macpherson
Pathology Director
Spire Healthcare

Since even the most minor ailment can have serious implications on an elite athlete's performance, access to immediate and effective healthcare treatment was essential at London 2012. Consequently, a state-of-the-art Polyclinic facility was built within the Olympic Village to give over 16,000 Olympic and 6,200 Paralympic athletes, as well as associated team officials, access to 24-hour healthcare services.

The Polyclinic effectively supported a very large temporary community, which in itself was a particularly unusual and diverse one; given the fact that the population originated from 204 competing nations and included elite athletes, as well as their support teams. Consequently, the London 2012 healthcare team managed a wide variety of both sports-related and non-sports related injuries and illnesses. Within the clinic this team, which encompassed a broad spectrum of specialists, had direct access to the best possible on-site facilities, including radiology, dentistry, optometry, pharmacy and a pathology laboratory.

Olympic Pathology

Following the award of the tender by LOCOG to deliver on-site pathology services within the Olympic Village Polyclinic, as well as other Olympic venues, Spire Healthcare's UK pathology network of 18 laboratories increased in size during summer 2012. Spire had just one month to set-up and be ready to manage a temporary on-site pathology laboratory within the Polyclinic to deliver Haematology, Biochemistry, as well as pregnancy testing, and provide wider access to the full scope of pathology services.

Since the London 2012 Olympics were heralded as one of the most sustainable, Spire was required to reflect this ethos when setting-up their laboratory and to not purchase new equipment with which to kit it out. Therefore when it came to sourcing a haematology analyser that met these needs, Spire approached HORIBA Medical to secure a loan and service support for an ABX Pentra 80 analyser. Spire's laboratory staff were already



highly competent with this analyser, since it is used routinely to provide full blood counts with 5-part differential in all 18 of Spire's UK laboratories. Other selection criteria for the analyser included reliability, rapid results delivery and flexibility to deal with an unpredictable workload. Furthermore, due to the speed that the laboratory had to be set-up, it was essential that the analyser was robust enough to work 'off the shelf'.

Testing Times

In addition to the requirements for speed of laboratory set-up and validation two months in advance of the Olympics, the Spire team faced several other logistical challenges, including that of site access due to security. All staff had to be fully accredited, and even then they and equipment had to pass through airport style security with sniffer dogs every time they entered the Olympic site. For example, installation of analysers into the Polyclinic laboratory involved the availability of the correct paperwork for all cars and personnel (including HORIBA engineers) and a two hour wait at the security check point! Additional operational challenges arose during Games themselves where reagents, consumables and other supplies had to also be security checked, so it was essential that stock was closely monitored to ensure that shortages did not occur. Furthermore, since Spire provided ready access to more specialist tests within their laboratories local to Olympic sites, such as Elstree, Gatwick Park and Brentwood, it was necessary to closely manage the logistics of courier transfer. Couriers were not allowed on site and had to phone in advance of arrival to be met at the gates and patient samples then transferred. Consequently, to ensure the efficient running of pathology testing during the Olympics, careful and tight management was essential.

Rapid Reliable Results

Although the team of highly experienced Spire staff had to work long hours to provide the seamless 24/7 pathology service, many felt it



to be one of the best experiences of their professional lives to become part of the 2012 Olympic Polyclinic team. Indeed, both Spire staff and analytical equipment alike were greatly appreciated by the LOCOG healthcare team.

"The ABX Pentra 80 was a great hit with all the International Olympic team doctors who were fascinated and delighted to have such a great piece of kit on site and have such rapid results available. This was the first Olympics and Paralympics that had such equipment on-site and it proved very popular," commented Kathy Gaule, National Pathology Quality Manager Spire Healthcare.

Dr Fergus Macpherson, Pathology Director, Spire Healthcare, affirmed these comments. "The performance of the ABX Pentra 80, and also the support given by HORIBA to enable us to meet the blood testing requirements of our LOCOG contract, have completely confirmed that we made the right decision in opting to use HORIBA across our pathology laboratory network. The reliability of the company and its analysers have been demonstrated in spades at the London 2012 Polyclinic, with rapid support given and only routine analyser maintenance required."

"I'm only sorry for the HORIBA engineers whose emergency call-out numbers were not required, as the ABX Pentra 80 worked perfectly throughout the Olympics and Paralympics. I believe that they were somewhat disappointed, as they would have liked an excuse to visit whilst the Games were in progress!"

Backing up the conclusions reached by Spire, a recent paper analysing the use of the Olympic Village Polyclinic concluded that the pathology services were able to satisfy demands and that a similar structure of facilities and expertise in one clinic was recommended when planning future mass participation sporting events

Analysis Anywhere

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