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## Rio Olympics Wrap-up: The Game of Injuries, Health Concerns, in a Country Desperate For Healing



### **Back To Usual**

Well, the world's most hallowed sporting event is over. We can now relax, go back to work after taking days off to watch those table tennis and badminton battles, and settle back down to a soothing night game of America's Great Pastime. America was the overwhelming "winner" in medal count (127, though this thinking has always gone against the spirit of the games) with China again behind them (70) and a surprising third in Great Britain (67). Sprinter Superman Usain Bolt lived up to his name, making his dominance seem so effortless: at least less than his bravado. All is well, right? Nope.

Nope.

### **What Remains to be Seen**

This year's Olympics are actually far from over. Its significance will impact medical professionals for a while. How and if it will affect positive change in Brazil remains to be seen. And how effective economically served this struggling country will be debated.

This year was different, though. In assessing how the Rio games stand against past Olympics, a lot of people – a good amount in the medical community – are far from satisfied. In fact, in its aftermath, some reporters are raising a serious question: was the Rio Olympics the most dangerously unhealthy Olympics ever?

They have reasons to ask. The following tally will be much less glorious than gold, silver, or bronze, to be sure.

### **The Zika Virus**

In June, the World Health Organization convened to consider whether the threat of the Zika virus being exposed to thousands across the globe will spread the virus worldwide, potentially causing an epidemic of global proportions.

According to *U.S. News & World Report*, “For most people, the Zika virus causes only a brief, mild flu-like illness. [Yet] Recent research points to a possible connection to higher rates of Guillain-Barre syndrome in adults, a condition in which the immune system attacks nerves following an infection, causing muscle weakness and paralysis. In pregnant women, the virus can cause birth defects, including microcephaly – an abnormally small head and brain size.”

Because the threat this outbreak in a developing country ill-equipped to handle the potential repercussions are a concern, many health professionals lobbied for the games to be canceled altogether. Of course, this was a long shot. For a city in economic strife, this cancellation could financially be disastrous. So commerce won out: the games played on. The question of whether the medical expert's cause for alarm were overblown, or had validity, is to be determined.

### **Serious Injuries on the Fields**

While this post won't direct you to any gruesome footage of injuries caught on video, they're easily found (though I never knew why one would actually want to see a snapped tibia, other than medical ones).

The number of injuries didn't end there, however. The handling of them were also an issue. Here are just a few examples from various sources listed below.

As for other complications, below are a few examples that made some “Blame it on Rio” (sorry: couldn't resist).

- A host of brutal injuries saw a good amount of athletes taken to the hospital. Ok. But this happened only *three days* into the games.
- Serious injuries included broken legs and collarbones, fractured backs, and neck injuries.
- Many questioned why the Olympic diving pool had a tinge of “green” to it.
- Cycling – a sport particularly prone to injuries – often sees a good amount of ailing athletes. However, people like British cycling legend Chris Boardman said concerning the conditions: “I’m angry about that because I went down there and had a look at the course and saw those edges. We knew this was way past this being technical, this was dangerous.”
- Another British legend, rower Katherine Grainger who was going for her fifth Olympic gold medal, complained about the water. She stated it was “probably the worst Olympic conditions I’ve ever raced in”

### **The State of Health a Global Concern**

Even though the games are over, many won't go “back to usual.” The greatest health risk perhaps still remains: Rio itself. Harboring horrific poverty and festering, violent crimes, and the threat of a virus lurking, the spotlight the Olympics shone on Rio, and Brazil, will hopefully expose more people to the plights of a whole country that's injured.

Brazil may need the financial gain from hosting the 2016 Olympics, but more than that, they need help. May our world's best doctors come to their aid.

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