

The IPC's update on coronavirus disease (COVID-19) – 25/06/2020

The purpose of this biweekly update is to keep everyone within the Paralympic Movement informed of the latest developments with the COVID-19 pandemic and how it relates to the Paralympic Games and Para sport.

This week's update contains the following information:

- The collaboration driving the return to safe sport, by Professor Wayne Derman, Director of the Institute of Sport and Exercise Medicine at Stellenbosch University
- IPC and Tokyo 2020 updates – includes publication of a new IPC Classification guidance document
- World Health Organisation update
- Latest media statements from the IPC – 'Potential impact of COVID-19 on Para athletes'

Our lead article this week is from Professor Wayne Derman, who is Director of the Institute of Sport and Exercise Medicine at Stellenbosch University and is an active member of the current IPC Medical Committee. A past president of the South African Sports Medicine Association, his research has focused on secondary prevention of chronic disease of lifestyle, and injury and illness prevention in athletes, especially those with disabilities.

Professor Derman represents the IPC on the Outbreak Prevention Taskforce, an organisation created at the beginning of April by World Athletics to provide guidelines for endurance events considering the COVID-19 pandemic. Last week they launched an online risk assessment and mitigation tool for endurance event organisers.

In the article Professor Derman explains the genesis of the Taskforce, and how working collaboratively quickly saw them research and develop the tool which he believes will not only benefit endurance sport and the Para athletes involved in it, but a wider array of Para sport organisations.

The update this week also includes important new Classification guidelines. Members will soon be receiving a new document called '*IPC Classification Hygiene and Infection Control Guidelines*', that details how safe classification may return to Para sport.

We want this mail to continually highlight initiatives that NPCs, IFs and athletes are doing. If you would like to let us know about your story or raise awareness of any other initiative, then please get in contact at ipc.media@paralympic.org.

Among the things we wanted to briefly highlight this week was the way that the Paralympic Movement supported each other in regards to the decision not to include wheelchair tennis at the US Open. Following representations made by athletes, the IPC and NPCs, we are pleased to see that the United States Tennis Federation reversed its decision and agreed that athletes with disabilities should not be disadvantaged because of the COVID-19 situation. We also thank the International Tennis Federation for their efforts in ensuring that Para athletes will be fairly represented.

There are also a couple of very hopeful articles on the IPC website from athletes directly dealing with COVID-19 in their lives.

- Italian Para canoeist Estaban Farias, lives in Lombardy, one of the worst hit regions of the world by COVID-19. [Here](#) he discusses his creative ways of training and the joy of being back on the water.
- Venezuelan Para swimmer Genesis Leal is an inspiration to us all – as a doctor she has been treating COVID-19 patients in her home state of Aragua. Despite her training being interrupted, she is more determined than ever to make Tokyo 2020. Read about it [here](#).

The collaboration driving the return to safe sport, by Professor Wayne Derman, Director of the Institute of Sport and Exercise Medicine at Stellenbosch University

The COVID-19 pandemic has been unique in our lifetime. This threat on a global scale is something few of us have experienced. There have however been many heartening things to come out of this crisis, and in sport one of them is how it has solidified a new way of collaboration and working.

They say that necessity is the mother of invention. Back at the beginning of 2020 none of us were thinking that a disease may bring an abrupt halt to physical activity and the sports industry. Being active keeps people healthy and there are also many people employed in endurance sports, from the professional athletes to the organisations that deliver mass gathering races. So, for the last three months, those of us with a responsibility for endurance sport have been trying to create new ways to put on events safely.

In early April, following the confirmation of the postponement of the Paralympic and Olympic Games, the Outbreak Prevention Taskforce was formed by World Athletics, with the International Institute for Race Medicine and the medical chairs from five other global sports federations:

the International Cycling Union, World Triathlon, International Ski Federation, World Rowing, and the International Paralympic Committee. There was a healthy acknowledgement that many athletes with disabilities are involved in endurance sport, particularly marathons for people with a vision impairment, wheelchair marathons, hand cycling, triathlon and Nordic skiing. As I have an academic interest in this area, it was suggested I join from the Medical Committee to represent the IPC.

We started adapting an existing tool for mass gatherings that was developed by the World Health Organisation. We wanted something that would benefit those involved in endurance sport: the medics, the administrators, the commercial entities putting these events together, etc, in order to create a safer environment for athletes and everyone involved.

Last week World Athletics and the Taskforce team launched an [online risk assessment and mitigation tool](#) for endurance event organisers. The tool is intended to help organisers assess the risk of staging an event, establish the preparedness of the community and the event organisation for the risks of COVID-19, and clarify any necessary steps to further mitigate and reduce the risk.

We wanted to help them understand the varying risks posed by the pandemic e.g. the tool recognises whether the pandemic is active, receding or subject to additional waves where the event is taking place. Until a vaccine is found there is never going to be zero risk. Instead we look at mitigation strategies that can be employed to lower that risk as much as possible.

It's a pushing and prompting tool that examines things like: does the event include athletes from parts of the world where the pandemic might be more active, or is this just a local event? Will spectators be present or not? What is the plan in place in case there is an outbreak during the event, and can people be safely referred to the local hospital? Are the feeding and watering tables, and the people using them adequately protected? So, it's a tool of education and a tool of mitigation.

The tool is also undergoing ongoing development which we will look to augment for Para sport. While someone competing with a limb deficiency wouldn't have an increased risk over any other participant, that's not the same for all Para athletes. For example, an athlete with a vision impairment running with a guide means that two people are working in close proximity. Wheelchair users or athletes with high support needs might have an entourage assisting them. They might be those with an immune deficiency

or problems with coughing or air expulsion. So there are different levels of consideration for several categories of athlete.

Use of the tool doesn't guarantee an event can take place, because every meet will be subject to local conditions, laws and authorities. For example, in South Africa the rules are that there is no community sport whatsoever, so the chances of holding an event now are close to zero. However, the tool does allow event organisers to go to local authorities and present a considered plan, so they can be ready to go when the rules change. Another benefit of this work is that it is a template that can be used by other sports.

While obviously we would rather not have to create the Outbreak Prevention Taskforce, it has been a fantastic and highly encouraging collaboration. We have had people from all different backgrounds putting their heads together to come up with something that is in the interest of sport, athletes and the community.

It's facilitated work that might have been more difficult to do in the past. In a non-COVID world for something like this to happen we would all have had to fly in from all over the world and we would have needed to get funding for that. As it is, thanks to video conferencing and a will to succeed, this initiative has been achieved with minimal cost to get everyone together, in record time and to a high standard. Endurance sport can be proud that it has played a role in developing something very necessary in the fight to get back to sport during these challenging times.

The Outbreak Prevention Taskforce online risk assessment and mitigation tool can be accessed [here](#)

IPC & Tokyo 2020 updates

New IPC Classification guidance document published

This week the Membership team will be issuing a new document to Members from the Classification team. Titled '*IPC Classification Hygiene and Infection Control Guidelines*' it details how safe classification may return.

As restrictions are slowly lifting in some countries, we are starting to see a return to Para sport and subsequently classification opportunities.

To support the safe return to classification, the IPC has developed this new documentation. The IPC considers the health and well-being of all

(including athletes, classifiers, support staff and volunteers) to be of paramount importance.

The aim of *IPC Classification Hygiene and Infection Control Guidelines* is to support classification organisers and their stakeholders (e.g. IFs, NPCs, local organising committees, classifiers etc.) when organising classification activities.

These guidelines are specific to the current COVID-19 pandemic and they are not intended to replace local laws, regulations or guidance. All local health and safety legislation and regulations should be complied with; and local government and public health authorities' laws and regulations should be followed and should take precedence over these guidelines.

The guidelines were developed by the IPC Medical and Classification departments with the support of the IPC Medical Committee and a sub-group of IF, NPC, classifier, and athlete representatives.

The IPC's objective is to recommend practices that will minimise the risk of infection as much as possible, bearing in mind that some risk will always remain.

Tokyo 2020 Qualification

The most up-to-date version of the Tokyo 2020 qualification regulations can be found here: <https://www.paralympic.org/tokyo-2020/qualification-criteria>

The list of sports covered now with updated qualification regulations is: Archery, Athletics, Badminton, Boccia, Canoe, Cycling, Equestrian, Football 5-a-side, Goalball, Powerlifting, Rowing, Shooting, Sitting Volleyball, Swimming, Table Tennis, Taekwondo, Triathlon, Wheelchair Basketball, Wheelchair Fencing, Wheelchair Rugby and Wheelchair Tennis.

Tokyo 2020 Media Accreditation

Tokyo 2020 has begun contacting the NPCs that applied, in 2019, for press accreditation for the Games. They are seeking to confirm if NPCs will keep the current numbers and organisations they have approved for the Games next year.

Additionally, the IPC Media Operations is contacting the international news agencies, IFs media teams, ENRs (non-rights holders) and future OCOGs to also confirm if their previous applications are still valid.

Para sport event postponements and cancellations

The list of cancelled Para sport events remains on the IPC website and is being regularly updated. You can find details [here](#).

World Health Organisation update

According to WHO's latest Daily Situation Dashboard on 25 June 2020 10:37 CEST, the number of confirmed worldwide cases has risen to nearly 9.3 million. The Americas account for nearly half of the worldwide cases to date. John Hopkins University of Medicine is reporting that nearly 4.8 million people have recovered.

The WHO is particularly concerned that the last week there have been two days that reported the highest number of daily cases – 18 June saw 181,232 cases, and 21 June reported 183,020 cases.

In the first month of the COVID-19 outbreak, less than 10,000 cases were reported to WHO. In the last month, almost 4 million cases have been reported. WHO expect to reach a total of 10 million cases within the next week. They say is a sober reminder that, even as we continue research into vaccines and therapeutics, we have an urgent responsibility to do everything we can with the tools we have now to suppress transmission and save lives.

The IPC continues to use the WHO and their [site](#) as its main source of information regarding the COVID-19. It provides regular situation reports and contains a wide range of guidance on health and protection, travel advice, as well as extensive myth-busting and technical guidance sections.

Their '[Key planning recommendations for mass gatherings in the context of COVID-19](#)' guidance can be accessed on this link.

WHO's WhatsApp messaging service

WHO's WhatsApp messaging service is providing the latest news and information on coronavirus in seven languages: Arabic, English, French, Hindi, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish.

Arabic

Send "مرحبا" to +41 22 501 70 23 on WhatsApp

wa.me/41225017023?text=مرحبا

English

Send "hi" to +41 79 893 18 92 on WhatsApp

wa.me/41798931892?text=hi

French

Send "salut" to +41 22 501 72 98 on WhatsApp

wa.me/41225017298?text=salut

Hindi

Send "नमस्ते" to +41 22 501 73 41 on WhatsApp

<https://wa.me/41225017341?text=नमस्ते>

Italian

Send "ciao" to +41 22 501 78 34 on WhatsApp

<https://wa.me/41225017834?text=ciao>

Spanish

Send "hola" to +41 22 501 76 90 on WhatsApp

wa.me/41225017690?text=hola

Portuguese

Send "oi" to +41 22 501 77 35 on WhatsApp

<https://wa.me/41225017735?text=oi>

Latest IPC media statements

Potential impact of COVID-19 on Para athletes (drafted 18 March, reviewed 30 April)

At the IPC the health and well-being of Para athletes is our top priority and we are working hard to gather as much information as possible on the potential impact of COVID-19 to provide appropriate advice.

Concern has been raised that Para athletes may be at more risk of severe disease from COVID-19, in the same way as has been stated for elderly people and for people with certain underlying health conditions.

However, the Paralympic athlete population is not a homogeneous group. Para athletes are all individuals with very different underlying conditions and health needs, so the notion of a one-size-fits-all approach to COVID-19 is not appropriate or representative of an individual athlete's risk.

Nevertheless, because of the severity of the impairment or any associated immune deficit or chronic condition, some athletes could be more

vulnerable. There are no current studies on the potential impacts of coronavirus on Para athletes. The honest answer is that we don't know because this is a new strain of coronavirus and there are very little data available.

Consultation with the IPC Medical Committee and International Federation medical experts, as well as information provided by the World Health Organisation (WHO), indicates that there has been no evidence that an athlete with disability in general has a higher risk of contracting COVID-19.

Para athletes are also more experienced than the general population in following hand hygiene, coughing etiquette and general infection avoidance procedures as part of illness prevention education - this has been a principle of Para athlete education for some time. However, at this time we all should be even more vigilant in this regard.

The IPC will continue to seek advice from the WHO, but ultimately athletes are the best judge of their own body and their medical needs.

Our advice for Para athletes is that they should follow the current medical guidance from the WHO and their national guidelines on prevention and seek advice from medical professionals. We would urge any athlete displaying the symptoms to report to their local medical authorities without delay.

Important website links

- [World Health Organisation](#)
- [Centres for Disease Control and Prevention](#)