

# Motivation and Satisfaction Among Polyclinic Volunteers at the 2002 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games

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Running title: Polyclinic volunteer motivation and satisfaction

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No author or related institution has received any financial benefit from research in this study.

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**Background:** The Olympics and Paralympic Games rely on volunteers to provide essential services, including medical care of athletes, to an extent that may be unmatched by other sporting events. Despite the growing reliance on and importance of volunteers, no studies have been published characterizing the motivation or factors responsible for the satisfaction of Olympic and Paralympic healthcare volunteers.

**Hypothesis:** There are significant motivational differences between Olympic and Paralympic Polyclinic volunteers.

**Study Design:** Prospective cohort study.

**Methods:** All 2002 Polyclinic healthcare providers were asked to voluntarily complete a questionnaire containing a modified Special Event Volunteer Motivation Scale. Information regarding satisfaction with the volunteer experience was also collected.

**Results:** There was no significant difference in motivation summary scores or in satisfaction summary scores based on event worked. There was a negative correlation between age and motivation summary scores, but age showed no association with satisfaction summary scores. There was a strong positive correlation between motivation and satisfaction. Physician respondents had lower mean motivational scores than did non-physician volunteers. Significantly fewer physician than non-physician volunteers planned to use their volunteer experience to help market their professional practices.

**Conclusions:** There were no significant motivational differences between Olympic and Paralympic volunteers. The 2002 Polyclinic volunteers appear to have been motivated by a complex process that might be described as “enlightened self-interest,” and all were satisfied with their experiences. Our results may assist organizers of future Games in selecting motivated volunteers and in creating rewarding work environments for them.

Since being established by Pierre de Coubertin in 1896, the modern Olympic Games have grown into the largest sporting event in the world. The Paralympic Games, an outgrowth of the International Wheelchair Games inaugurated by Sir Ludwig Guttman in 1948, have similarly grown since their inception, and have become the second largest international participatory sporting event worldwide. To an extent perhaps unmatched by other sporting events, the Olympic and Paralympic Games depend on volunteers to provide a variety of essential services ranging from transportation and translation to medical care. Indeed, since the 1980 Lake Placid Winter Olympics, when an estimated 6,000 volunteers were selected and trained for the Games, the Olympics have become increasingly reliant on a capable cadre of volunteers (Table 1). Not surprisingly, Dr. Jaques Rogge, President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), has concluded, "...without [volunteers], sport and Olympism would be orphans. It would not be possible to organize the Olympic Games and competitions at all levels without volunteers' commitment and dedication."<sup>7</sup>

The New York Declaration,<sup>9</sup> adopted by attendees of the World Congress on Olympic and Sport Volunteerism (hosted by the IOC and the United Nations), defines a volunteer as, "one who freely chooses, without any expectation of monetary or material gain, to contribute his or her time, energy, skills, experience, service and support to an organization." As seen in Table 1, approximately 20,000 volunteers participated in staging the 2002 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in Salt Lake City, Utah. It has been estimated that the Salt Lake Organizing Committee (SLOC) received more than three applications for each volunteer position. Volunteers were selected after a thorough interview and screening process, and were required to participate in an extensive pre-Games training program. The results were, by all accounts, outstanding, and the reliance on volunteers (including those positions previously staffed only by

