

2012 OLYMPICS & PARALYMPIC GAMES: GSK'S ANTI-DOPING SUPPORT

Sector: Pharmaceutical

Region: UK

Organisation: **GlaxoSmithKline (GSK)** is one of the world's leading research-based pharmaceutical and healthcare companies, employing over 96,500 people across 100 countries.¹

Project summary: As part of GSK's tier 3 sponsorship of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, in November 2009, the company announced their partnership with **King's College London** to provide facilities and equipment to operate a **World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)** accredited laboratory, for the forthcoming Olympic Games.


Context of the initiative: Sport has been plagued in recent years by top-level athletes abusing banned substances. In March 2011, Britain's minister for Sport and the Olympics, Hugh Robertson, said he viewed doping as the most serious threat to the integrity of London 2012.² As such, as part of the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games' (LOCOG) commitment to sustainable development and social responsibility, the Committee aims *"to ensure the integrity of sport, the health of athletes, to make sure that athletes are safe and that competition is fair."*

GSK's mission is "to improve the quality of human life by enabling people to do more, feel better and live longer".³ One of GSK's core values is its commitment to transparency and by integrating responsibility and transparency into its business GSK looks to build positive relationships and trust with its stakeholders. GSK's medicines are researched and produced to

¹ <http://www.gsk.com/about/ataglance.htm>

² <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2011/07/04/uk-gsk-doping-wada-idUKTRE7631ZQ20110704>

³ <http://www.gsk.com/mission-strategy/>




deliver health benefits for patients, and the company's research efforts are targeted specifically at conditions where the patient's need for new medicines is greatest.⁴ GSK also recognises that there is always the potential for the uncontrolled use of medicines by a minority of athletes seeking advantage in sport.

Overview of the initiative: GSK saw its role with the London 2012 Games as more than just a supplier of business materials but instead as an opportunity to bring and share knowledge and expertise with the company's various stakeholders. To this effect, and as part of the anti-doping platform, the company set up three partnerships.

1. GSK formed a partnership with King's College London to provide facilities, equipment and expertise as part of a confidential information and lab-testing service for the Games. The facility will be based at GSK's research and development site in Harlow and run independently by King's College London. Through this laboratory, thousands of samples will be analysed throughout the Olympic and Paralympic Games, 24 hours a day.
2. Building upon this partnership, in July 2011, GSK formalised an historical partnership with the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) to supply confidential information about medicines in early-stage development which could potentially be abused by athletes once they are released to the general market. Under this agreement, medicines in development will be reviewed by GSK scientists to identify substances which may enable performance-enhancing effects within sport. Any new medicines found to have performance-enhancing characteristics will be highlighted to WADA and confidential scientific data relating to them will then be transferred from GSK so detection methods can be employed.
3. Thirdly, King's College London and GSK have set up an initiative called "*Scientists in Sport*" which will deliver a series of free events between April 2011 and the Olympic Games in 2012 across the UK. These events will offer local school children the opportunity to experience a day at a university and, through a series of sports-based lectures and interactive workshops, aims to encourage 11-14 year old students to take their science studies further and consider a career in science.⁵

⁴ <http://www.ukad.org.uk/news/wada-gsk-announcement>

⁵ <http://www.gsk.com/media/london-2012-scientists-sport.htm>



Issues and challenges: Being an Olympic Games partner is a highly visible worldwide platform, in particular with regards to anti-doping activities, which have the potential to undermine the integrity of the Olympics. Therefore, a key consideration for GSK was to ensure that a robust and transparent approach was implemented through working with leading experts (King's College London and WADA). Although GSK had already worked with London King's College and WADA individually, this multi-partnership with two experts enables GSK to give credibility and objectivity to the entire initiative and to the work of GSK.

More broadly was the challenge to link this one-off business service initiative into the wider GSK commitment to responsible values-based business. The organisation's work with WADA and the commitment to incorporate transparency (relating to performance enhancement) into new product development links directly with this approach. As John Fahey, WADA President, notes, *"Our work with the pharmaceutical industry is critical to staying one step ahead of the dopers, who have an ever increasing level of scientific expertise."* Similarly, the company's work around the **"Scientists in Sport"** initiative demonstrates how GSK seeks to create a sustainable legacy for science and sport beyond the 2012 Olympics.

Why did Article 13 select this initiative? The anti-doping initiative is relevant to GSK's core business activities and its community commitment which is to "invest in community partnership programmes that seek to improve access to medicines and healthcare around the world." Through this initiative, GSK has greater involvement in the anti-doping campaign and is demonstrating its commitment to the community. By supporting anti-doping initiatives, GSK recognises and deals with potential medicines risk. This positive initiative brings ethics into business and increases stakeholders' awareness. By working with external and independent partners, it enables the laboratory to be run independently which thus prevents it from potential conflicts of interest, and assures objectivity and credibility.

The WADA partnership is a long-term project where the Olympic Games 2012 is a great first catalyst to launch the initiative; thus it becomes a real way to incorporate an ever-increasingly responsible approach and expertise into the business.



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