

## Invited Article

### Team India Gearing Up for Victory at the World Transplant Games

Shankar Arora

Team Manager, Team India @ World Transplant Games 2023



Athletes Parade at the World Transplant Games, 2019 (p.c. Rich Kenworthy)

The World Transplant Games are held every two years by the World Transplant Games Federation, which was established in 1978 and is recognized by the International Olympic Committee. The Games offer an opportunity to transplant recipients and donors to represent their country in a sporting event, competing at a high level against their peers. With more than 60 countries represented and 2000 athletes participating, it is, in essence, the Olympic Games for transplant patients.

Of the many challenges facing the Team Managers, perhaps the most frustrating challenge is how few people know about the games. Fewer still know that India has been participating, and winning medals, at the games for more than a decade. Despite having trained and funded themselves, Indian athletes have done our country proud by winning medals against well-trained and well-funded teams from across the world.

The athletes who have won medals is nothing short of inspiring - Balveer Singh, a government teacher from a small town outside Lucknow who is a kidney recipient and, Davies Kollanur, a transplant coordinator from Thrissur and a two-time kidney recipient and cancer survivor are just two examples. They have struggled to put together finances to travel to almost every Games since 2011, but continue to strive towards excellence. Together, they have won six medals while representing Team India.

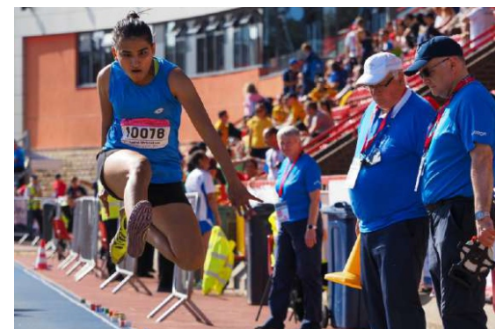
With the 2021 Games cancelled due to COVID-19, the next Games are scheduled to be held in Perth, Australia in April 2023. ORGAN India, an NGO based in New Delhi that spreads awareness on organ donation has been appointed as the Member Organization for India for the 2023 Games. Our endeavour is to take a substantial, well-trained, and well-funded team to the games. More than 75 transplant athletes have already registered with us and are hoping to make it to the Games.



Davies Kollanur - Kidney Transplant Recipient

Raising funding for a large-scale event such as this is a daunting task, but we believe it is of vital importance to the cause of organ donation awareness. The participating athletes are a source of inspiration and hope to transplant patients everywhere, that not only can there be life after transplant, but there can be an exceptional life after transplant, for both recipients and living organ donors.

But perhaps more importantly, it allows us to leverage the larger, more visceral appeal of sports to get our message to a wider audience. To tell the world the stories of these exceptional people, recipients and donors, survivors and saviours, in the hope of inspiring more and more people to engage with the cause. In this endeavour, we will need all the help we can get, donors, sponsors, partners, supporters. If you would like to join us in helping the Indian team, reach out to us. Stand with us. Help us take our team to Gold in Australia.



Ankita Shrivastava at the WTG Athletics, 2019 (p.c. Richard Hall)



Balveer Singh - Kidney Transplant Recipient

India's last outing at the Games in Newcastle in 2019 saw the largest contingent till date, a team of 14 athletes, including 3 donors and 11 recipients travelled to Newcastle Managed by Light-a-Life – Reena Raju Foundation, the team came back with a haul of 7 medals from disciplines as varied as golf, athletics, and badminton. For the first time, an Indian donor, Ankita Shrivastava, came back with three medals, two golds and one silver.

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