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Study to Examine Long-Term Health Effects of Hosting The Olympics

By Noah Brode, August 6, 2012

A professor at Millersville University in Lancaster is examining the public health effects of Olympic Games on host cities.

Dr. Jeffrey Wimer is traveling to past, present, and future Olympic sites to determine whether the residents of host cities see long-term benefits from the games. He said he hopes to publish a report within six months.

Wimer said the cities sometimes demolish the roads and buildings created for the Olympics, but he said such infrastructure is often converted for alternate uses. Wimer pointed to Moscow's reuse of structures built for the Olympic Games of 1980.

“The athletes were shuttled from the Olympic village to a warm-up site, and that site is now being used by the community to exercise and use the swimming pool,” said Wimer. “Same thing in Atlanta: we see that Georgia Tech actually is using the swimming complex, I believe, now.”

As Rio de Janeiro prepares for the 2016 Summer Olympics, Wimer said some residents of the large slum neighborhoods called “favelas” are protesting the new developments as gentrification.

“The government in Rio, in Brazil, is already starting to move some of the residents and make way for the highways, to kind of give a little different appeal to the public when the Olympics will be there,” said Wimer.

While some residents are loathe to leave the favelas, Wimer said others support the changes.

“These communities sometimes have increased levels of crime that can occur, so the government and some of the other residents are trying to embrace the Olympic movement,” said Wimer.

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