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## Local doctor heads to Sochi

Dr. Gloria Beim is Team USA's chief medical officer

By Heather Sackett

Associate Editor

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A doctor who has been practicing in Telluride for 16 years is in Sochi, Russia preparing for the influx of skaters, skiers, snowboarders, bobsledders and ski jumpers.

Dr. Gloria Beim is Team USA's chief medical officer for the Olympic Winter Games, which begin on Feb. 7. Beim will oversee a staff of roughly 50 doctors, chiropractors, athletic trainers and physical therapists who will be prepared to contend with anything from major injuries to chronic flare-ups, illnesses and active recovery. The goal is to provide the same level of care athletes receive at the Olympic Training Centers in the U.S.

"Hopefully, I won't have to treat any injuries, but there are lots of other things to do," Beim said. "We want to replicate what the athletes have back home. We are there 24/7 for them."



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This is not the first time Beim has been a part of preparing athletes for international competition. She was a team physician for the cycling and taekwondo teams at the 2004 Olympic Summer Games in Athens and provided medical care at the 2012 Olympic Summer Games in London.

Beim's specialty is sports medicine, with a focus on shoulders, knees and injury prevention. She founded Alpine Orthopaedics, which has offices in Gunnison and her home of Crested Butte. She also sees patients every Monday in Telluride.

While Beim has a lot of experience treating winter sports injuries, during the Games she has to be ready for anything. One of her fondest memories of the Athens Olympics doesn't even involve medicine. At a judo match, the judge told a U.S. athlete she wouldn't be allowed on the mat because of a logo on her uniform. With just five minutes to go before the match, Beim grabbed her suture kit, usually used for stitching up cuts, and quickly sewed a small patch over the logo. The athlete was allowed to compete with just seconds to spare.

"I had this athlete training her whole life for this one moment," she said. "When you get to do a small thing to help an athlete succeed, it's incredible."

Beim flew to Russia this weekend and will spend the next two weeks before competition begins checking out the local hospitals, seeing where the athletes and medical staff will be housed, meeting with the state department and making sure emergency action plans are in place. She has also been learning Russian in preparation for her trip.



*"Going to the mountains is like  
going home"*

— John Muir

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Scott Bennett and Ashley Story, Brokers Associates,  
970-729-1666

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"I've been studying hard so I can't wait to just get over there and start talking to everyone," she said.

Beim was also asked to be a U.S. team physician at the 2008 Olympic Summer Games in Beijing, but declined because she was pregnant with her son Jakob. This time around, Beim's family — husband Erik, daughter Skylar and Jakob — will get to experience the Olympics too. They will soon join Beim in Sochi for about three weeks. Beim said she is excited that her kids will get to learn about different cultures and experience how inspirational the Games can be.

"The Olympic environment carries an energy that I cannot explain," she said. "Nothing compares to the Olympics. The energy is in the training room, the dining hall, the sporting venues. It's just so exciting and thrilling and to witness history is amazing."