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WVA/WMA GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON ONE HEALTH

Drivers towards One Health
**“Strengthening collaboration between
Physicians and Veterinarians”**

21-22nd May 2015, Madrid, Spain

REPORT

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Introduction

On 21 and 22nd of May 2015, The World Veterinary Association ([WVA](#)) and the World Medical Association ([WMA](#)) in collaboration with the Spanish Medical ([SMA](#)) and Veterinary ([SVA](#)) Associations organized the Global Conference on 'One Health' Concept with the theme: *Drivers towards One Health - "Strengthening collaboration between Physicians and Veterinarians"*.



The Global Conference brought together 330 delegates from 40 countries around the world. Veterinarians, Physicians, Students, Public Health Officials, and NGOs representatives received presentations from high level speakers and had the opportunity to learn, discuss and address critical aspects of the One Health Concept. During the conference breaks, poster sessions took place where delegates could view and discuss different One Health topics with the authors.

The main objectives of the conference were to strengthen the links and communications and to achieve closer collaboration between Physicians, Veterinarians and all relevant stakeholders to improve the different aspects of health and welfare of humans, animals and the environment. After short welcome speeches session by the Presidents of WVA, WMA, AMA, SVA, SMA, the Spanish Ministry representative and the FAO/OIE/WHO Tripartite representative, the conference started with different sessions on:



- Zoonotic diseases.
- Antimicrobial resistance.
- Natural disaster management – Preparedness and vet-med collaboration.
- One Health in food production.
- Veterinary Education of One Health Concept.

In summary:

In the introduction session, the speakers reviewed the historic evolution of medicine and veterinary medicine which had developed closely together for centuries, and even much earlier, until the two professions diverged due to specialization and consumer priorities. However, now in the 21st century, the risks have changed due to increasing population, increasing population density in urban centres, larger numbers of animals kept in close proximity, wildlife environment encroachment putting people in closer proximity to wildlife etc. which requires an integrated approach by physicians and veterinarians to combat different types of health threats.

With regards to **Zoonotic diseases** (e.g. Ebola, rabies), speakers underlined the need to move toward prevention, better surveillance, early detection and information sharing. There is also a need to understand the conditions which allow diseases to emerge and spread,

such as areas of increased population density in cities, increased intensive farming, and increased travel globally. The economic costs of response (in money and loss of lives) vs. investment in prevention are the reason to invest in preventive systems and improved health care infrastructure; *"Remember, vaccines don't protect, vaccination does."* (Ab Osterhaus). There is a need to learn from recent experiences, and move from a crisis-driven society to one of prevention and preparedness.

With regards to **Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)**, speakers highlighted the lack of data, the politics involved, and the over and under use of antibiotics in various situations. The finding which suggests that the precursor (CC17) for Vancomycin Resistant Enterococcus (VRE) is found in dogs rather than other species, calls for an urgent need to gather much more data on the use of antimicrobials in companion animals as much as in food producing animals.

With regards to **Other Aspects of One Health session**, speakers mentioned:

- Invasive species such as the giant African land snail (GALS);
- Medications leading to toxicity in wildlife and other environmental concerns;
- Human interactions with animals, drivers of human behaviours and human health priorities, such as obesity and mental health, all of which may see benefits from animal ownership for exercise, comfort, and companionship;
- Disaster preparedness, response, and recovery with both medical and veterinary responses in the East Japan great earthquake and tsunami of 2011;
- Our roles in controlling rumours and misinformation; and
- Our roles in education on One Health in our educational institutions about zoonotic diseases and pharmaceutical stewardship.

Conference conclusions, recommendations and future initiatives

A show of hands for medical vs. veterinary professionals, and medical vs. veterinary students, still reveals a strongly veterinary audience. How do we get more physicians in the audience? Yet, there was a strong presence of young professionals (students) which is very encouraging at this meeting.

What made this meeting unique was that it was organized by the WVA and WMA, along with the Spanish Veterinary and Medical Associations, with strong support from the Spanish insurance industry for health professionals. This occurred because of trusted relationships built over time. Two unique strengths are:

- The WVA and WMA have a powerful voice with potential for increased impact when they speak collaboratively as both human and animal health care professionals.
- The WVA and the WMA have close relationships with the high-level intergovernmental organizations of OIE, WHO, and the FAO of the United Nations.



The FAO/OIE/WHO Tripartite representative stated that influence comes from Leadership, Networking, Cooperation, Facilitation, Building trust at the highest levels and Communication. Trust is built many times with teamwork in groups on projects. Effective communication depends on who is in the audience, and learning how to communicate our technical scientific knowledge in an emotional and impactful way to specific audiences.

The overall conclusion:

- Human health, animal health, and the ecosystems are interlinked and there is a need for a coordinated, interdisciplinary approach to address risks that emerge at the animal-human-ecosystems interface.
- There is a commonly shared concern that as the cross-border human, animal, food and seeds mobility increases, so does the threat for the spread of dangerous pathogens and infectious diseases.
- More education and more training for the next generation of experts are required.
- There is a need for an information-sharing framework in order to detect and fill knowledge gaps, and to strengthen inter-disciplinary cooperation.



Recommendations

The key objectives should be to promote a cross-disciplinary and collaborative approach in order to improve human health and animal well-being. There is a need to foster scientific research on zoonosis and vector-borne infectious disease and it is important that new scientific findings will be disseminated and translated to anyone who might benefit from them. To achieve the above mentioned, there is a need to invest in relationships at three levels:

A. Students

- The Global One Health Challenge sponsored by Global Alliance on Rabies Control and World Animal Protection inspired the medical and veterinary students to work on One Health projects, building new relationships and cooperation.
- There is a need to inspire more activities of this nature for students and even professional association members.

B. Professional Associations (local, national and on regional levels)

- This meeting is a great model for future meetings in other countries with co-sponsorship from both the WMA and WVA with national associations e.g. Japan where collaboration between the JAMA and JAVA has been well-established. More countries should be encouraged to apply such a collaborative model.
- There is a need to initiate stronger support for education on human health factors related to pet ownership such as obesity and mental health, as well as more education on responsible use and disposal of medicines and drug availability, with emphasis on decreasing antimicrobial resistance.

- There is a need to support and strengthen national associations in communities to be effective advocates on issues of education, policy, legislation, enforcement, and effective statutory bodies.

C. Intergovernmental Organizations

- WVA and WMA need to continue building relationships with Intergovernmental Organizations through in-person visits and activities to build trust and to raise our combined voices for improved health care infrastructure.
- Together with Intergovernmental Organizations, WVA and WMA need to express the importance of governments to invest in the protection of their own citizens with effective preventive human and veterinary health care infrastructure, surveillance, early detection, and a well-trained health care workforce with effective protection.
- WMA and WVA shall continue their cooperation on these educational forums for both public and private sectors and to have more frequent and appropriate communication between policy makers and scientists.

Future initiatives

The WVA/WMA Global Conference on One Health exceeded the attendance expectations with full capacity. Many attendees were highly impressed with the program and organization. This was a huge success, lending credit to the importance of the speakers, poster presentations, and good logistical organization of the meeting. WVA and WMA agreed that more conferences like this one shall follow to also include educational webinars online for wider audiences.



Conference material and presentations

Click on the following for the:

- [Program of the Conference](#) (including the links to the presentations. Click on the presentation title)
- [Speaker abstracts booklet](#)
- [Poster abstracts booklet](#)
- [Pictures from the conference](#)

