

Practicing “One Health” for the Human Health Clinician

(Physicians, Osteopaths, Physician Associates, Nurse Practitioners, Other Human Health Care Providers)

What is One Health Practice?

The One Health clinical concept recognizes that the health care of humans and animals in a community benefits when there is collaboration and communication between human and animal health professionals.

Why should human and animal health care professionals collaborate?

More than 50% of households include at least one pet, and this percentage may be growing.

- Zoonotic infections: Animal contact can pose a risk of zoonotic infectious disease, and this risk increases if there are infants, elderly, or immunocompromised individuals in the household. Veterinarians are a source of expertise regarding zoonotic diseases; disease control in animals can help limit the patient’s exposure to infectious pathogens.
- Animal allergies: If humans are developing allergies to animals in the household, a consultation with a veterinarian may help identify alternatives to getting rid of the pet
- Human animal bond: humans can develop deep bonds with animals, and this can have therapeutic value and implications for medical care. For example, people may change their behavior for the better (such as tobacco cessation) if they recognize that such changes will also benefit their pets.
- Animals as sentinels: like the “canary in the coalmine”, animals may show signs of exposure to a toxic or infectious hazard in the environment before humans, providing an “early warning” of environmental risk. Communication between human health care providers and veterinarians is necessary to share such information.

What are some potential benefits of a One Health Approach?

1. Improved diagnosis and prevention of infectious diseases transmitted between animals and people
2. Improved management of animal allergies
3. Improved psychosocial status of patients
4. Early detection of environmental health hazards
5. Improved patient satisfaction

What changes in practice are necessary?

The One Health approach can involve very simple and manageable changes in clinical practice.

1. Take a history of animal contact for your patients.
2. Consider consulting with a veterinarian on cases related to animal contact.
3. Encourage your patient to have their veterinarian contact you with questions about health issues that overlap between humans and animals.
4. Set up a meeting between local veterinarians and human health care providers to discuss possible cross-referrals and other collaborations.

References and website resources:

Human-Animal Medicine – Clinical Approaches to Zoonoses, Toxicants and other Shared Health Risks

<http://www.us.elsevierhealth.com/product.jsp?isbn=9781416068372> – 1st Edition (2010)

Handbook For Zoonotic Diseases of Companion Animals - <http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/Products/handbook-for-zoonotic-diseases-of-companion-animals.php> - 1st Edition (2008)

CDC Healthy Pets Healthy People <http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/>

One Health Initiative website www.onehealthinitiative.com

Canary Database <http://canarydatabase.org/>

Produced April 2012 by

One Health Initiative Autonomous pro bono Team:

Laura H. Kahn, MD, MPH, MPP • Bruce Kaplan, DVM • Thomas P. Monath, MD

Jack Woodall, PhD • Lisa A. Conti, DVM, MPH

with assistance from Peter M. Rabinowitz, MD, MPH

