



HOW TO STRENGTHEN THE ONE HEALTH EDUCATION IN THE VETERINARY HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT – THE APPROACH IMPLEMENTED AT EGAS MONIZ

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INTRODUCTION

As the human population continues to grow and our relationships with animals continue to strengthen, understanding the interdependencies of humans, animals and the environment becomes ever more critical. Veterinarians are essential to achieve One Health and to protect the health and safety of its three pillars – animals, humans and environment - and their role is easy to understand because animals both impact and are impacted by humans and the environment. Indicators show that One Health is an integral part of the curriculum in most veterinary degrees awarded in Europe. However, veterinarians and other professions are still being educated mainly in isolation, with minimal interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary interaction. At Egas Moniz, we strongly believe that the One Health approach in veterinary education has to mean more than a good knowledge of prevention and control of diseases, epidemiology, use of medicines, food safety, ethical responsibilities, animal health and welfare and sustainable farming. Our Integrated Master's in Veterinary Medicine has been structured and implemented, awarding the responsibility for the education of 21st century veterinarians, where One Health concept is imprinted on its "DNA".

METHODOLOGY

In general, veterinary medical education has been facing new challenges, especially in preparing veterinarians for the societal challenges of the twenty-first century. To ensure that One Health is well implemented and understood throughout teaching and research, the Integrated Master's in Veterinary Medicine (IMVM) at Egas Moniz (EM) is developing and implementing a quantitative survey to map how well interdisciplinary teaching and research is understood and implemented for the One Health approach. A questionnaire-based approach is being planned and structured, comprising both multiple-choice and open questions to collect data on the integration of interdisciplinary collaboration in undergraduate and post-graduate education and research projects. The focus will be on: interaction with other educational establishments and professions; the potential for learning more about the way it is integrated in the different curricula; an understanding of the difficulties and challenges faced with the implementation of this novel teaching model; and

the academics' perception of the value of such a teaching model, by collecting views on the actual or expected benefits for the students, the profession and society.

RESULTS

EM is a health institution dedicated to advancing the knowledge, learning and education of its students, at the service of improving health conditions for global society. Thus, health, in a broad sense, constitutes the core of our education programs and research. The IMVM-EM is also reflecting this vision, contributing to the multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary perspectives expected and desired in One Health education. At IMVM-EM, issues that in traditional curricula are covered in silos are instead approached transversally, supported by educational strategies as problem-based learning activities. Integrated approaches and selection of case studies that properly cover the One Health content are carefully selected by a team of professors with a multidisciplinary and complementary background. Contents and materials are produced with a focus on avoiding repetition and promoting the interlinks between courses. The questionnaire will provide quantitative information about the impact of these methodologies, identifying those that should be privileged and establishing those examples that should be mirrored, considering the appropriate adequacy.

DISCUSSION

The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) has been a leader in recognising that an understanding of the principles of One Health should be at the core of veterinary education. The Association of American Veterinary Colleges addressed this issue when it published a Roadmap for Veterinary Medical Education in the 21st Century. In this roadmap, it recommended that all veterinary students achieve competency before graduation in three main areas: multispecies knowledge plus clinical competence in one or more species or disciplines; One Health competency related to the intersection of animal, human and environmental health; and the development of professional competencies. Knowing this, the concept of One Health has captured the enthusiasm of EM by seeking to improve animal and human health through stronger interdisciplinary collaboration and a holistic approach that demands an open collaboration encompassing multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary health education. It is evident that changing the culture to encompass One Health in daily veterinary teaching and practice requires a complete change in the way professionals approach all phases of biomedical practice.