

World Health Day

Ensuring Health & Sustainability in Europe: Doctors and Veterinarians emphasize “prevention is better than cure”

Brussels, 7 April 2014

On the occasion of the 2014 World Health Day, the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) together with the Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME), supported by the Greek Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the European Commission, organised a One Health conference advocating that “prevention is better than cure”. Several speakers presented different aspects of One Health¹, and around 125 participants actively engaged in the discussion.

Conclusions

- Health can be defined² as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” The health and wellbeing of people, and equally health and welfare of animals, are strongly interlinked. Health is a precondition for well-being respectively welfare. Well-being and welfare reinforce health.
- **ONE HEALTH**³ recognizes that the health of humans and animals as well as their ecosystems are interconnected. It addresses health risks at the human-animal-ecosystem interfaces. One Health requires applying a coordinated, collaborative, multidisciplinary and cross-sectorial approach to addressing potential or existing risks that originate at the animal-human-ecosystems’ interface.
- While the pathogenicity can vary per host species, people and animals share a large number of micro-organisms. In many cases, cause and course of diseases are comparable. The same applies for measures for disease prevention, treatment and control. The advancement of the health and well-being of people and animals depends on good collaboration between different professions and disciplines, in the public as well as in the private sector.
- There is a need for a global strategic approach. Such global concepts should be guided by key-principles on the adoption of multidisciplinary, multi-sectorial and multinational policies and activities. Solid inter-sectorial collaboration and coordination among sectors is of paramount importance together with the establishment of timely information exchange on disease occurrence, early effective epidemiological surveillance and early warning systems’ operation.
- Education, pre and post graduate, is key for the quality of the services delivered by the health professions. It is important to bring the One Health concept across to future health professionals. Closer collaboration between veterinary schools and medical schools will foster a broader view on One Health issues.
- The use of medicines against micro-organisms and parasites inevitably creates selection pressure and contributes to the occurrence and spread of resistance. Collective measures that

¹ http://www.fve.org/news/presentations/GR%20Conference_2014/001%20Agenda_%2010a.pdf

² <http://www.who.int/about/definition/en/print.html>

³ http://www.onehealthglobal.net/?page_id=131

help to reduce selection pressure and the spread of resistant strains are needed. As there is a need to safeguard the effectiveness of these medicines, in particular antibiotics, it is essential that these are used responsibly both in human clinical practice (primary care and hospitals) as well as in veterinary medicine (farm and companion animals).

- Health is value in itself. It is however also a factor of economic growth for both the medical and veterinary sector. In order to achieve more effective investment in health, the close collaboration of doctors and veterinarians is necessary. “Prevention is better than cure” can be equally applied to both the medical and veterinary sector and have the same positive results both in terms of health and welfare of people and animals. A more holistic approach is a key factor for the financial sustainability of health care systems and animal health management.
- For certain animal diseases, in particular those diseases that impact on trade, international policies and standards for disease prevention and control are agreed. However, the underpinning aspect of any future (national) preventive or control actions has to be surveillance leading to impact assessment, epidemiology and economic analysis.
- EU Member States shall enforce the use of existing tools for detection, surveillance, control and monitoring of health risks in animals and people. Additionally, the development of new tools, especially of diagnostics, vaccines and new medicines for the different species, shall be promoted and supported. Joint research projects should be particularly encouraged.
- Convening joint political discussions only at times of emergency or crisis is not sufficient to yield successful results. Ongoing dialogue is necessary. The establishment of health departments in the EU Member States which embrace both the medical and veterinary sectors could lead to an easier coordination of actions through a One Health approach.
- Political efforts should include the establishment of technical boards, both at national and international level, which bring together physicians and veterinarians in a One Health perspective. In that respect, the involvement of doctors, veterinarians and other professionals in the FAO –OIE –WHO tripartite partnership should be considered.
- Health professionals have an obligation to take the lead in providing society with high quality evidence-based information on health. Enforcing the relationship between patient and doctor and the one between animal keeper and veterinarian will ensure appropriate health management in practice. Speaking with one voice and promoting shared messages will multiply the outreach to and raise awareness of the public.