

Creation of the first Multidisciplinary "One Health" Chair in Cuba: towards a new paradigm in health

Constitución de la primera Cátedra Multidisciplinaria "Una Salud" en Cuba: hacia un nuevo paradigma sanitario

Constituição da primeira Cátedra Multidisciplinar "Saúde Única" em Cuba: rumo a um novo paradigma de saúde

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Dear Editor:

To many people "One Health" (Una Salud) may once have seemed simply a concept, but it is no longer possible. Future pandemics can only be prevented with an integrated "One Health" approach to Public Health, Animal Health, and the Environment that we share.⁽¹⁾

Increasing risks such as: emerging zoonoses (Lassa, Nipah, Hendra, West Nile viruses; AIDS, dengue, Lyme disease, influenza viruses (H1N1, H5N1 and H7N9), SARS, MERS-CoV, Zika, Ebola and other filoviruses), as well as the presence of silent zoonoses (vector-borne hemoparasites and hemoplasmas) and re-emerging diseases (rabies, Chagas disease, malaria, leptospirosis, human and bovine tuberculosis, foot and mouth disease)^(2,3) are problems for health systems and services and affect sustainable development at regional and global levels.

The effects of antimicrobial resistance, environmental contamination, lack of food safety and security, scarcity of drinking water, in addition to the effects of climate change with its modifications in the host-pathogen-environment interaction, lead to collaborative efforts of multiple disciplines through local, national and global work to achieve optimal health for people, animals and the environment.

The change in the traditional paradigm with "One Health" strategies to prevent, detect and respond effectively to the health challenges arising from the relationship between humans, animals and the environment must start from the technical teams, decision makers and the general population, especially from Primary Health Care, which must be provided with tools, principles and best practices, through an integrated and unifying approach to balance and optimize the health of people, animals and the ecosystem in a sustainable manner. The accompaniment with a System of Science, Technological Innovation and Environment is a task of the first order.

In Cuba, there is the National Plan for Social Economic Development 2030 with Macroprograms of Science, Technology and Innovation and in it is inserted the project "One Health" in the national health strategy for sustainable development, approved by the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers on June 9, 2021, which allowed working in an interdisciplinary manner between different sectors and reaching a consensus on a comprehensive work project to address health problems of common responsibility.⁽⁴⁾

Among the strengths identified in Cuba for the implementation of this new health strategy for sustainable development with a "One Health" approach are: the political will of the country's leadership, nationwide public and animal health systems, permanent and continuous improvement as a guiding principle of medical education on prevention and integrated risk reduction, joint indications of the Ministries of Public Health, Agriculture and the National Civil Defense General Staff (EMNDC) for dealing with disaster situations and Decree Law No. 31/2021 on animal welfare. Directive 1/2022 of the EMNDC and the sectoral project led by CITMA (Science, Technology and Environment) with the participation of all the agencies of the central administration of the State, are documents that also mark the integrated approach in disaster risk reduction of scope in the proposed new health paradigm.

On the other hand, this approach is not free of challenges to develop at all levels this holistic vision of the new paradigm, among them: the presence of a regulatory framework, the strengthening of intersectoral work mechanisms, the identification and preparation of health professionals (decision makers with the "One Health" approach), the securing of financial resources for the implementation and maintenance of the policy, the inclusion of environmental factors in the risk assessment and the creation of indicators to measure the implementation of this policy.

Having said all of the above, it is necessary to integrate the "One Health" vision in the health plans and programs implemented by MINSAP at all levels of the National Health System; in particular, the identification of "One Health" actions for the updating and improvement of disaster risk reduction plans in health services and institutions, and the visualization of "One Health" tasks in the management cycle in the services and institutions of this sector.

Based on this new health paradigm, the first "One Health" Multidisciplinary Chair was created in Cuba, at the "General Calixto García" Faculty of Medical Sciences, belonging to the University of Medical Sciences of Havana, with the premise that the Honorary Chairs were created to stimulate research and study on topics of interest in the promotion of actions that bring together scientists, teachers and students in such a noble and profitable activity for human knowledge.⁽⁵⁾



This chair, from a holistic and integrative vision, incorporates a contemporary multisectoral and transdisciplinary treatment to this new approach as a valuable complement to the curriculum of health sciences careers, thus contributing to the permanent and continuous improvement of human resources through undergraduate and graduate courses designed by the faculty of the chair with the participation of other institutions, universities and organizations, as well as the dissemination of related events to encourage the participation of students, specialists, decision-makers and the community.

Encouraging exchanges of experiences with other chairs and institutions, enriching experiences and achieving better results, developing related research projects are concrete examples of the relevance of this Multidisciplinary Chair "One Health", which is open to the entire scientific community.

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