




One Health vision, consolidation of the Cuban health care paradigm

La visión One Health, consolidación del paradigma salubrista en Cuba

A visão “Saúde Única”, consolidação do paradigma da saúde em Cuba

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Received: 14-03-2023 Accepted: 22-03-2023 Published: 31-03-2023

How to cite this article:

Maynard-Bermúdez GI, Maynard-Bermúdez RE, Antonio da Silva-Gerardo AD. One Health vision, consolidation of the Cuban health care paradigm. Rev Inf Cient. 2023; 102:4202. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7790465>

The sciences synthesize reality and try to find explanations to various problems present in different aspects of nature and society. From dissimilar fields of knowledge and in the most diverse geographies, they try to clarify multiple issues related to human health but, on many occasions, scientific advances are limited by the lack of integration.

The speed of implementation and generalization of research results is slow; they are valued as isolated facts that encounter incomprehension and resistance to change from those who have to put them into practice. However, the demands for problem solving from a social perspective, in a sustainable manner, lead to the emergence of new approaches. This has occurred with the One Health vision and the health paradigm. It is surprising how, along parallel paths, they evolved. Both visions have demonstrated the influence on human health, climate change, deterioration of natural living conditions, water and food quality, animal and plant health problems. However, their systemic integration is recent.

The real nexus of human health with all the aspects that regulate planetary life was evidenced with the COVID-19 pandemic. It exposed and exacerbated inequality gaps and showed the inadequacies of health systems and states to cope with it.

The pandemic has shaken the planet, provoking politicians and scientists to find new ways of doing things in order to preserve human health. In this sense, Dr. Tedros Adhanom⁽¹⁾, Director-General of the World Health Organization, has said: "...the COVID-19 pandemic is a clear reminder of the intimate and delicate relationship between people and the planet, which we can only address with a One Health approach...".

Undoubtedly, the world is in dire need of proposals that contribute to the preservation of human health. These must be interrelated with the health of animals and plants, the curbing of climate change and the balance of the ecosystem. The methods used so far have not achieved the necessary impact.

In this sense, the sustainability of the changes will only be possible if the analyses for human health care are carried out from a holistic, integrated, transdisciplinary and interprofessional vision that privileges life on Earth. The preservation of biodiversity is a health imperative.

Consequently, the One Health vision emerges strongly, defined as the collaborative effort of multiple disciplines (human or animal health personnel, researchers from various branches of knowledge) working locally, nationally or globally to achieve optimal health for people, animals, plants and the entire planet.⁽²⁾ This vision allows consolidating the health paradigm because it is innovative from the biological, social and technological point of view; it is disruptive by introducing changes and overcoming previous paradigms. (Maynard Bermúdez Gl., inaugural conference of the Science and Innovation Student Fair, Universidad de Ciencias Médicas de Guantánamo, January 2023).

In Cuba, health thinking has moved further. Public health is understood as an important multidisciplinary process, as a social product where everyone is object and subject. However, obtaining favorable results is not sustainable. Often, these results do not correspond to the efforts made in the health sector. Consequently, the harmonious, organized interaction of sectors, social actors, families, individuals and service providers is required.

Cuban health professionals, led by the Cuban academic Castell-Florit,⁽³⁾ consider that the social production of health is determined by the health reality of the object of work and by what is expected to be done in the future in approach to that reality. It is neither casual nor spontaneous; a characteristic that sometimes appears in tasks based on non concrete actions. In the social context of health production, it is also necessary to consider the rigor that is sustained in the composition and form of action of those responsible for these processes.

Similarly, Castell-Florit⁽³⁾ insists that intersectorality is the necessary vehicle for producing health and, in turn, a principle that governs the process. The expected results in the production of health will depend on the degree of commitment and organizational and individual response capacity of each of the sectors in relation to health, wellbeing and quality of life, as well as the factors that operate as facilitators or obstacles.

The strengths and opportunities of the Cuban health system are the starting point for the sustainability of the One Health vision. The theoretical and practical advances and the technologies of the health paradigm, the organization of society and the political will for the preservation of health in the population are guarantors for its consolidation.



However, it is necessary to consolidate the effective involvement of all sectors of society, communities and individuals. It is necessary to modify the modes of action of health professionals, whose current actions in the solution of health problems have led to a decrease in the commitment and responsibility that other sectors, social actors and individuals have towards human health.

The plan to confront COVID-19 in Cuba is an example that demonstrates the effectiveness of integration, directed at the highest political and governmental levels. The involvement of all sectors and social actors set a distinctive seal of integration for the solution of health problems and was the key to its success; it resulted in social and professional growth.

Accordingly, since March 2021, the Cuban One Health program has been approved. In this regard, Dr. Ileana Morales expressed: "...the "One Health" approach in the national health strategy, which is an urgent need to Cuba, if we take into account the dangerous scope of health problems at a global level, which demand a more scientific, systemic and efficient approach, based on more comprehensive policies.⁽⁴⁾ The authors consider that there are still health problems that require an approach based on the One Health vision, among them: adolescent pregnancy, dengue and aging.

The implementation of the One Health vision leaves no room for improvisation and demands a deepening of scientific thinking, even when urgent changes are needed, they must be made progressively, because they generate a cultural change. The behavioral and communication sciences must play a significant role. Everyone must be sensitized and involved. Everyone must know what and how to do to improve the health of the planet. When we act from the understanding that we are all sanitarians, the spaces and tools for the social production of health can be adequately used, this will be the consolidation of the Cuban health paradigm.

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Conflict of interest:

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

Funding:

The authors did not receive funding for the development of this article.

