

'One Medicine – One Health' interview with Ronald M. Davis[†], MD, President of the American Medical Association, 14 May 2008

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Summary

A brief account is presented of the unique historical background leading up to the American Medical Association (AMA) adopting a landmark 'One Health' resolution in June 2007. The historic 'One Health' liaison between the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and AMA was fostered by collaboration between Roger Mahr and Ron Davis when they were both serving as Presidents of their respective organisations. This cooperative relationship resulted in what has been referred to as the 'One Health initiative' in the United States. National and global implementation is the goal.

Keywords

American Medical Association, American Veterinary Medical Association, Animal health, Global implementation, One Health, One Medicine, Public health, Resolution.

Intervista di "Una sola salute – Una sola medicina" a Ronald M. Davis[†], MD, Presidente AMA (*American Medical Association*), 14 maggio 2008

Riassunto

Viene presentato un riepilogo del percorso unico che ha portato l'American Medical Association (AMA) all'adozione dell'epocale risoluzione "Una

sola salute" a giugno 2007. Lo storico contatto per l'iniziativa "Una sola salute" tra l'American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) e l'AMA è stato promosso grazie alla collaborazione tra Roger Mahr e Ron Davis, entrambi presidenti delle rispettive organizzazioni. Da questa intesa è nata quella che negli Stati Uniti è nota come l'iniziativa "Una sola salute", un concetto globale di salute, con l'obiettivo di un'implementazione a livello sia nazionale che globale.

Parole chiave

American Medical Association, American Veterinary Medical Association, Implementazione globale, Risoluzione, Salute animale, Salute pubblica, Una sola medicina, Una sola salute.

Interview with Ronald M. Davis and American Medical Association link to the American Veterinary Medical Association 'One Health' Taskforce

Roger Mahr, President of the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) contacted me to discuss his vision for bringing animal and human medicine together. I hadn't thought about the issue previously, but I was happy to meet with him to learn more about it.

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I suggested that he come to Lansing, Michigan, to visit with the new dean at the veterinary medical school in East Lansing, and to meet with me. We ate dinner together while he educated me on the issues.

The more I learned about it, the more I realised it made a lot of sense. I had been preaching on the need for more collaboration and communication between health care and public health. I write a monthly president's column and in an early column I mentioned the importance of cross-disciplinary collaborations and mentioned 'One Health'.

My background is in public health and epidemiology, so I was acutely aware of the problem with zoonoses and the need for collaborative surveillance and disease control. In other words, I was primed for the issue of 'One Health'.

I told Roger that I would be happy to help out. I thought the best way to get the AMA involved would be through a formal resolution. One of the challenges to get such a resolution through was the issue of competing priorities. Our House of Delegates wanted us to prioritise our efforts more since in the past years, we had spread ourselves too thin. We have done that, so to add new initiatives is a major challenge. Another challenge is the issue of scope of practice. A lot of physicians, especially those in the AMA, are concerned about incursions into physicians' scope of practice, such as advanced practice nurses, podiatrists, etc. It's not so much of an issue with veterinary medicine, but the term 'One Medicine' might have conjured up this concern.

The way the 'One Health' resolution came out looked like 'mom and apple pie;' however, there are always concerns about costs of implementation. Every AMA resolution has a fiscal note attached to it. Some could have minimal costs while others could cost as much as US\$10 000 to US\$100 000. If the fiscal notes are significant, then there could be a lot of opposition. Fortunately, the 'One Health' resolution had a modest fiscal note. But it also might suggest that the organisation won't do a

lot to allocate resources either through hard cash, in kind, or resources.

The AVMA Task Force is winding down. One of its recommendations is to create a standing committee that might turn into a national commission. Asking for contributions from organisations could be a challenge. We'll see fairly shortly whether the AMA can contribute. It has paid for Larry Anderson (MD) and myself to attend the 'One Health' Task Force, but that wasn't a substantial hard cash commitment. For a bigger financial commitment, it will have to go through a review process which brings up the issue of competing priorities again.

I like the idea of forming a National 'One Health' Commission. My feeling is that there needs to be a dedicated staff and infrastructure in order to support a campaign. I would also like to see 'One Health' implemented on a global front. I have drafted a 'One Health' resolution for the World Medical Association (WMA) to consider. It is on the agenda for the WMA Council meeting in the next couple of days. This resolution would endorse the next action step of the WMA establishing dialogue with the World Veterinary Association (WVA). It would be nice to have a 'One Health' Commission visible on a global scale.



Figure 1
Ronald M. Davis, MD, President, American Medical Association (AMA), Roger K. Mahr, DVM, President, American Veterinary Medical Association and Laura H. Kahn, MD, MPH, MPP of Princeton University
June 2007 – AMA Meeting during 'One Health' resolution testimony
The historic resolution was subsequently adopted
(Photo: Courtesy of Joseph L. Murphy, MD)

The AMA 'One Health' resolution was originally drafted by Laura Kahn under the guidance of Ron Davis (Fig. 1). Thomas P. Monath MD and Bruce Kaplan DVM assisted.

Ron passed away on 6 November 2008 (1).

Reference

1. Kahn L.H., Kaplan B. & Monath T.P. 2009. *In memoriam*: Great 21st century physician 'One Health' leader dies. Ronald M. Davis, MD, Past President, American Medical Association. *In 'One health – One medicine': linking human, animal and environmental health* (B. Kaplan, L.H. Kahn & T.P. Monath, eds). *Vet Ital*, **45** (1), 209.