

MEDIA ADVISORY

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Vet-med leader seeks unity in fight against global threats

‘One Health’ message: No single profession can fend off barrage of emerging diseases

Pathogens don’t recognize national borders, heed socioeconomic distinctions or cower in the face of certain medical specialties, so why should disease fighters compartmentalize their response to such threats?

That question lies at the heart of “One Health,” a burgeoning movement dedicated to the notion that physicians, veterinarians and environmental scientists must work together — locally, nationally and internationally — to stand any chance of protecting the world’s inhabitants from a seemingly unending barrage of existential dangers, including emerging diseases.

“We share the globe. We have a very small planet in the scheme of things,” said Michael D. Lairmore, DVM, PhD, president of the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC) and one of the One Health’s most outspoken champions. “The threats that affect us — climate change, zoonotic diseases, human population growth, changing land use, the stress that’s on the Arctic right now, for example — these are all problems that cannot be fixed with one discipline.”

Lairmore, who has served as dean of the University of California-Davis School of Veterinary Medicine since 2011, discussed the One Health concept — and why some healthcare professionals have been slow to embrace it — in a just-released edition of the higher-education podcast *Innovators*. The audio series is presented by Harris Search Associates, a global recruiting firm specializing in academic medicine, engineering, and technology.

Among Lairmore’s observations:

- On One Health’s historical roots: “It was known in ancient times that healers of both humans and animals often practiced similar arts. It was only later that they became, in a sense, split.”
- On the resistance sometimes faced by veterinarians: “We often find ourselves called, in a sense, to a problem, such as a foodborne-illness outbreak, but, in some cases, we’re convincing our colleagues of our role in the equation. Sometimes, we are knocking at the door, trying to get into that equation.”
- On the difficulty of persuading freshly minted DVMs to pursue postgraduate research in critical fields: “Graduating veterinarians do face choices. Many of them want to go into practice. We don’t fault them for that. We understand that. But there are also great needs in our society.”

The 30-minute interview was conducted by Richard A. Skinner, PhD, a two-time former university president who now serves as senior consultant at Harris Search Associates.

Innovators, which debuted in August 2017, features timely conversations with global thought leaders in the areas of higher education, research, engineering, technology, and the health sciences.

“Our goal is to give listeners the opportunity to learn from national leaders who are changing the landscape of innovation and discovery,” said Jeffrey G. Harris, founder and managing partner of Harris Search Associates. “Now, more than ever, information really is power.”

The conversation with Lairmore and an archive of previous *Innovators* segments are available on the web at harrisandassociates.com and on leading podcast platforms such as Apple Podcasts, Libsyn, Google Podcasts, Overcast, Stitcher and Spotify.

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