

Veterinary education for global animal and public health

Coordinated by D A Walsh

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This 28th annual volume published by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), addresses the need for a global shift in the way veterinary students are taught veterinary public health (VPH). As well as taking the lead in prevention and control of animal diseases, the OIE develops health and welfare standards to promote food security and equitable international trade in animals and animal products. It considers veterinary education to be a key component in the quality of veterinary services globally. Professor R E W Halliwell, from the University of Edinburgh, suggests that curricula in most veterinary colleges are conservative and traditional and slow to respond to societal demands. Thus it has taken two decades to recognise that there is a lack of expertise in VPH and training in this area has remained a low priority. Change is also impeded by overcrowded curricula. Another major challenge highlighted by Professor P G Wall, from the University of Dublin, which echoes what is happening in South Africa, is how to stimulate interest and make VPH relevant to undergraduate students, who may see their future only in clinical medicine and surgery. He includes the whole of EU regulation number 854/2004 as an appendix to his paper. This document lists the professional qualifications required for an official (state) veterinarian. As the EU is an important trade partner these competencies are relevant to South African graduates.

In line with the direction that has been taken by the OIE, this compendium of 49 papers aims at encouraging and facilitating curricular change in VPH, so as to include food safety and security, livestock welfare, wildlife and aquatic animal health,

ecosystem health, zoonotic diseases, global trade and risk analysis, epidemiology and veterinary management of disasters and emergencies. Donald Walsh, the coordinator of the *Review*, suggests that there is good evidence that a successful curriculum should be based on a defined set of competencies in knowledge, understanding, skills and professional attributes that all veterinary students should have attained and demonstrated by the time they graduate. A 2nd level of competency, is seen as that level required by those who devote their careers to global veterinary public health issues and would be considered specialists. The interdependence of humans, animals and the environment has prompted a view of VPH that is more holistic and collaborative, with an action-based approach to solutions for global problems. These include the rapid spread of animal disease due to global transport, emerging zoonoses and climate change, which is linked both to intensification of production systems and also causes habitat changes for livestock and wildlife. One of the great challenges facing those veterinarians qualifying today will be to produce safe food for the nine billion people who will inhabit the planet by 2050, without compromising the environment. This *Review* would be of considerable interest as a guide and reference, not only to academics but also to veterinarians working for the state veterinary services.

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