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In this edition of Collaboration Café we speak to Dr Deborah Thomson. Dr Thomson is the Chair of the World Veterinary Association's One Health Education Subgroup and author of ['The Art of Science Communication.'](#) In addition, she has founded [One Health Lessons](#), an organization that inspires children and adults around the world

to value the interconnection between human health and the health of the environment, plants, and animals.

A Chat in the Collaboration Café

Hi Deb and welcome to Humanimal Hub's Collaboration Café. You're the CEO and Founder of the organisation, One Health Lessons, which presented a One Medicine conference to medical professionals in January, featuring Humanimal Hub member, Miss Anna Radford. Can you tell us more about this exciting initiative and what the conference covered?

The 1-hour online event featured both Miss Anna Radford, representing the (human) medical sector, and Dr Leslie Brooks, representing the (veterinary) medicine sector. Together, they created a case study where the patient was a 2-year-old female mammal that was straining to urinate (exhibiting stranguria). The audience consisted of professionals and final year students of both medical sectors and they had to work through the case together to diagnose and treat the patient. After the case study was finished, audience members wanted to network and share stories. It was a lot of fun!

PROFILE:

Dr Deborah Thomson



Dr Thomson is a clinical veterinarian and award-winning public speaker and has also served as a Science Policy Advisor in the United States Congress. Her articles have been printed in multiple publications, including The Lancet Planetary Health. Dr Thomson will also be one of the speakers at Humanimal Trust's One Medicine Day Seminar on 6 May 2022.

The work of One Health Lessons provides education opportunities covering the entire educational spectrum from early years to Continuing Professional Development. Why do you think that the role of education is so important in emphasising the interconnections between human, animal and the health of our planet and planting the seed of the benefits of joined-up approaches?

Education, or knowledge sharing and exploration, is the first step in moving societies to create a more sustainable planet. Let's look at the short-term goals and then take the long-term view.

When addressing the current state of the world, there needs to be more opportunities where people of different backgrounds come together and share knowledge. I have found that creating transdisciplinary and multisectoral events under the concept of Continuing Professional Development is very powerful. The sheer presence of individuals from various backgrounds in the same room, speaking the same language (i.e. medical jargon), is eye-opening.

For instance, at one point in the aforementioned case study, there was a problem that all clinicians could easily imagine- what happens when the patient's caregiver refuses permission for blood collection because they fear it may be too stressful for the patient? What should the clinician do then? All medical professionals in the audience could relate in this instance!

Taking the longer viewpoint now: By educating children about One Health, they will grow up with an innate appreciation for that interconnection and are expected to seek out multisectoral collaborations in their careers.



“By educating children about One Health, they will grow up with an innate appreciation for that interconnection “

As I have written in my book [The Art of Science Communication](#), think of children like stem cells- they can become politicians, teachers, parents, physicians, veterinarians and more. Teaching the rising generation of leaders is how there can be lasting societal change.

What do you think are the main factors preventing closer collaboration and greater working relationships between human and veterinary medicine and what more needs to be done to break down existing silos?

More conferences need to welcome speakers from outside their immediate silo. For instance, national or international veterinary medical conferences should have at least one physician speaking about their clinical experience. Note that I highlight clinical experience because the majority of veterinarians are clinicians and they would likely be curious to hear what is said from the human side of medicine.

An ideal situation is to have a veterinary specialist (e.g. neurologist) give a talk which is then immediately followed by a (human) neurologist giving a parallel presentation. The audience can stay in the same room and can witness the differences and striking similarities between the two talks.

To create such an opportunity, medical professionals need to submit abstracts to conferences where the audience does not share the same background as the speaker.

You've written a book on science communication and the pandemic has really focused on the need for science to be communicated clearly in a way that promotes understanding and dispels fear. Given your extensive experience in communicating to various audiences e.g. lay, professional and policy makers, what tips would you give to Hub members on how we can better communicate the science behind joined up medical approaches (such as those promoted by the concepts of One Medicine and One Health) to such audiences?

The first step to communicate One Health efficiently is to focus on actively listening to your audience. By listening, you can determine (1) their priorities, (2) their background, and (3) their interests and concerns. Since One Health is such a malleable topic, you can then craft your message to meet the needs of your audience. There is much more information in my book about this but that is a brief overview.

Finally, One Health Lessons offers an internship programme. Can you tell our members more about this and how they can contact you if they wish to find out more and about the work of One Health Lessons?

It is a pleasure to say that the One Health Lessons Internship Programme has been a success. Each intern has a set role with responsibilities that ultimately work toward the overall goal of educating everybody on the planet about One Health.

The specific requirements for applying and information about the current and previous interns are found at www.OneHealthLessons.com. So far, the intern classes have been between 2-14 people and have always consisted of people from various backgrounds: medicine, veterinary medicine, environmental health, public health, global health, American Sign Language, research, law, international relations, massage therapy and more. In return for their efforts, interns are individually mentored by me to improve their skills in leadership, networking and communication.

Save the date!

Humanimal Trust
One Medicine Day Virtual Seminar
Friday 6th May 2022
2pm till 5.15pm
'One Medicine in Action'.

Registration open now at <https://bit.ly/3Lirv2X>