

University of South Carolina - MATCH Project - Capstone Event - July 29-30, 2008 - Keynote presentation

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Managing the convergence of humans, animals, the environment and disease

Local Action Global Health seeks to establish an awareness of the trends and challenges within the convergence of humans, animals and the environment, and an understanding of strategies for the management of dilemmas within the convergence

Factors working at the convergence of humans, animals, the environment and microbes are increasing the potential impact of new and emerging infectious diseases in ways never before seen.

- Our human population is estimated to reach 9 billion by 2050
- Environmental health is being threatened by increasing animal production to feed a growing world
- Technology is increasing the ability with which animals, humans and products can move across collapsed spaces bringing disease from one part of the world to another
- There are more than 1,400 known pathogens with three to four more being discovered every year

A tool used to convey the connectivity between disciplines and sectors, and trends is the Convergence Map. It allows individuals and organizations to identify their place and role in the convergence context, those areas and sectors operating around them, and other sectors and groups with whom they should be collaborating.

Local Action Global Health also seeks to create communities of practice within the convergence issue. Four workshops held in Salzburg, Austria, in 2007, and at the University of Minnesota, Michigan State University, and Earth University in Costa Rica in early 2008, have united animal health and public health professionals from industry, government and academia.

These workshops have formed lessons learned, such as the premise that this interdependence between species requires a dilemma management view operating across multiple sectors. This differs from the traditional problem / solution mode of thinking and isolation of these challenges to single disciplines.

1st Lesson Learned:

Science and society are increasingly interacting and interdependent in managing the threats facing human and animal health

2nd Lesson Learned:

Managing dilemmas within the convergence will require collective action by many

3rd Lesson Learned:

From local to global, the biggest beneficiary for animal health activities is public health

4th Lesson Learned:

We must motivate leaders at all levels including those at the grass-roots to address convergence policies and resources

5th Lesson Learned:

Partnership across diverse sectors is critical to sustaining action at the convergence

6th Lesson Learned:

Injecting passion into what we do is a key part of the personal commitment needed to manage disease dilemmas

7th Lesson Learned:

Social movement on local levels is necessary to cultivate attention and affection for convergence issues

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Summary: Trent Wakenight - Conference Coverage - wakenight@hotmail.com