



One Health Concept

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This article is based on **“A ‘One Health’ approach that targets people, animals”** which was published in The Hindu on 04/05/2021. It talks about the relevance of One Health concept, as the world is facing a second wave of Covid-19 pandemic.

The father of modern pathology, **Rudolf Virchow**, emphasised in 1856 that there are essentially no dividing lines between animal and human medicine. This concept is ever more relevant as the world is facing a second wave of Covid-19 pandemic.

This approach is referred to as **“One Health”**, focuses on acknowledging the interconnectedness of animals, humans, and the environment. It involves a multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral approach to address potential or existing risks that originate at the animal-human-ecosystems interface.

To achieve the ‘One Health’ vision, challenges pertaining to veterinary manpower shortages, the lack of information sharing between human and animal health institutions, and inadequate coordination on food safety at slaughter, distribution, and retail facilities and others must be addressed.

What is One Health Concept?

- ‘One Health’ vision derives its blueprint from the agreement between the tripartite-plus alliance comprising the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).
- The overarching purpose is to encourage collaborations in research and sharing of knowledge at multiple levels across various disciplines like human health, animal health, plants, soil, environmental and ecosystem health in ways that improve, protect and defend the health of all species.
- The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) introduced the term **“One World-One Health”** in 2007 along with 12 recommendations (the Manhattan Principles) that focused on establishing a more holistic approach to preventing epidemic disease and maintaining ecosystem integrity.

Need for One Health Concept

- Scientists have observed that there are more than 1.7 million viruses circulating in wildlife, and many of them are likely to be zoonotic.
This implies that unless there is timely detection, India risks facing many more pandemics in times to come.
- Another category of diseases, “anthropozoonotic” infections, gets transferred from humans to animals.
- The transboundary impact of viral outbreaks in recent years such as the Nipah virus, Ebola, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Avian Influenza has further reinforced the need for us to consistently document the linkages between the environment, animals, and human health.

India’s One Health Framework

- In keeping with the long-term objectives, India established a National Standing Committee on Zoonoses as far back as the 1980s.
- Further, the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (DAHD) has launched several schemes to mitigate the prevalence of animal diseases.
In addition, DAHD will soon establish a ‘One Health’ unit within the Ministry.
- Additionally, the government is working to revamp programmes that focus on capacity building for veterinarians and upgrading the animal health diagnostic system such as Assistance to States for Control of Animal Diseases (ASCAD).
- Recently, funds were sanctioned for setting up a ‘Centre for One Health’ at Nagpur.

Way Forward

- **Consolidating Disease Surveillance:** There is a need for consolidating existing animal health and disease surveillance systems — e.g., the Information Network for Animal Productivity and Health, and the National Animal Disease Reporting System.
- **Developing Guidelines:** Developing best-practice guidelines for informal market and slaughterhouse operation (e.g., inspections, disease prevalence assessments), and creating mechanisms to operationalise ‘One Health’ at every stage down to the village level.
- **Holistic Collaboration:** One Health initiatives, by their multidisciplinary nature, entail working across ministries and navigating tacit institutional hierarchies and allocating leadership roles.
 - Therefore, One Health consortia requires the cooperation and active engagement of individuals, communities and society are needed.
 - Further, there is a need to cultivate champions in different sectors who can agree on common objectives. This will promote innovation, adaptation and flexibility in terms of political, financial and administrative accountability.

- **Establishing Institutional Mechanism:** There are already several cross-cutting efforts operating in India to develop protocols for a database of research into zoonotic diseases.
 - However, there is no single agency or framework that embraces all interdisciplinary sectorial players under a single umbrella to carry forward the 'One Health' agenda.
 - Thus, a proper institutional mechanism must be set up to implement One Health concept.

Conclusion

As India battles yet another wave of a deadly zoonotic disease (Covid-19), awareness generation, and increased investments toward meeting 'One Health' targets is the need of the hour.

Drishti Mains Question

One Health concept is ever more relevant as the world is facing a second wave of Covid-19 pandemic. Comment.
