One health

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Having worked in the UK veterinary industry for nearly 20 years, Sophie now combines her time between registered veterinary nursing and freelance journalism. Nursing representative for the Animal Welfare Foundation and lead nurse on an annual neutering programme for stray cats in Greece, Sophie is committed to good animal welfare. She is communications officer for an animal welfare organisation and writes and blogs about animals, nature and the environment.
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The One Health Initiative is a worldwide strategy that aims to increase collaborations between human medicine, veterinary medicine, science, agriculture and disease-control bodies, resulting in improved human and animal health. VN Futures – a partnership that began in 2016 between the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) and the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA), to outline the future of the veterinary nursing profession – has One Health as one of its six ambitions. Likewise, the British Veterinary Association (BVA) has a strong focus on the area too, with its current manifesto entitled, *Vets at the heart of a "One Health" government*, acknowledging the vital role veterinary surgeons play in the protection and promotion of animal health and calling on the government to work with the veterinary profession on policy change that will benefit animals and humans alike. So, it is clear to see One Health is a real priority for the veterinary profession, and rightly so. However, the Vet Futures Report (Vet Futures Project Board 2015) found that One Health did not resonate with many members of the veterinary profession, a theme echoed in the VN Futures project. So what, then, as veterinary nurses, should we all aim to know and understand about One Health and how can we be more involved with the Initiative?

When we hear the words One Health, what do we imagine? Is it biosecurity? Rabies prevention? Assisting working animals? The responsible use of antimicrobials? Educating owners about MRSA? In short, it is all of these elements and more. One Health is the central link between human health and animal health and for veterinary nurses that includes educating our pet owners, working together with human-centred nurses on resource collation and knowledge-sharing, and developing evidence-based resources for use with animal and public health campaigns. The One Health Action Group, the working party within VN Futures tasked with running the One Health Initiative agenda, is focused on the ambition of "forging a proactive role in One Health".

The group is focusing on four key actions, which are:

- To develop links with human-centred nurses in practice, to establish the potential benefits to each profession, share resources and work collaboratively on pilot projects under the One Health umbrella.
- To explore the development of a cross-profession committee and the organisation of regional One Health events and research partnerships.
- Through the use of shared resources, work to empower veterinary nurses to become more involved with, and lead on, public health campaigns.
- To develop an evidence-based resource for veterinary nurses.

The group's chair is Helen Ballantyne. Helen is a veterinary nurse and medical nurse who leads an enthusiastic committee whose responsibility it is to define One Health in relation to veterinary nursing and agree and move forward a strategy and agenda. The group are still consulting on the overall strategy, having only started working together at the end of 2016, but Helen already has an idea of what she hopes One Health and veterinary nursing will look like, saying:

> "While [a definition] will include some of the big One Health issues of the day, such as antimicrobial resistance

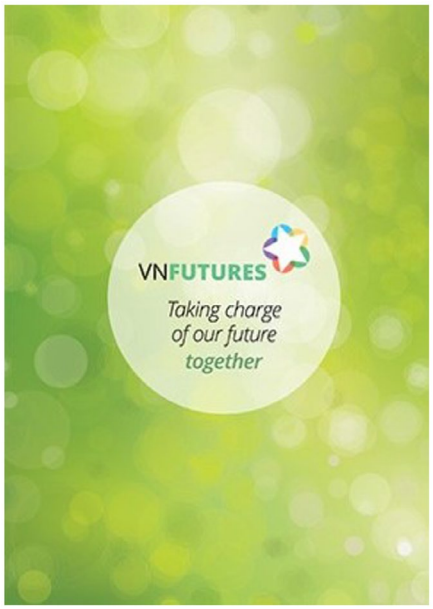

Figure 1. The VN Futures 'One Health Action Group', aims to get more veterinary nurses involved in the One Health Initiative

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Figure 2. Mission Rabies works on the One Health issue of rabies, saving thousands of human and animal lives annually
© Mission rabies.

and infection control measures, I also hope it will include working within local communities and building collaborations with our human-centred counterparts."

When the action group first met in December of last year, a preliminary step was for them to begin encouraging the sharing of good practice. This included looking at any existing projects linking animal and human health, sharing case studies and working with veterinary surgeons already involved in One Health projects, to enable veterinary nurses to play a more prominent role in activities. Speaking about how veterinary nurses can offer their initial input to the One Health Initiative, Helen said: "We know there are RVNs out there already participating in One Health projects, working with people and their animals in the community, so we are really keen to get in touch with them and learn from their experiences." With Helen's experience in the veterinary profession initially (she qualified as a RVN in 2005) and now within the medical profession (she currently works as a human nurse at Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust), she is well-placed to generate ideas about joint animal and public health campaigns and already has some great ideas for collaboration. "I believe that one of the key ways we may collaborate is to work closely with the Royal College of Nursing," said Helen.

"We have already begun to work with them on a project relating to smoking cessation and there may also be the potential to collaborate with their lead nurses in infection control and end of life/long-term conditions."

The subjects of infection control and antimicrobial resistance (AMR) are frequently mentioned when One Health is discussed and they feature high on the agenda with regards to a veterinary nurse's role in championing the overall Initiative. As student nurses and RVNs, we are likely to have learnt a great deal about infection control and the correct use of antimicrobials during our initial college training and then when entering a practice role full-time. Part of our day-to-day job should include educating owners on how to keep themselves safe from zoonotic infections, ensuring they are informed about keeping their animals and themselves protected from parasites and disease and correctly guiding them on how to complete a course of antibiotics or why antibiotics may not always be the answer for a specific problem with their pet. The latter is sometimes easier said than done, as many owners can be persistent about a prescription, even when the veterinary surgeon goes to great lengths to explain why it may not be necessary after all. A nurse's role can also include supporting our veterinary colleagues in these instances, by helping to reinforce their message and regardless of how competent a client says they are in giving a prescribed course of antibiotics to their pet, ensuring we run through dosages and guidelines every time we hand over a course of tablets. This is vital for the client's benefit and the benefit of their animal, as well as for the wider benefit to One Health.

Earlier this year, the BVA launched its poster, *Are you antibiotic aware?* It is perfect for any practice waiting room and helps to

Figure 3. Brooke improves health and welfare for working horses, donkeys and mules across the Middle East, Asia, Latin America and Africa
© Brooke.

Figure 4. Mission Rabies carries out mass sterilisation projects around the world, that vets and veterinary nurses can volunteer to be involved with
© Mission Rabies.

reinforce the six key messages relating to responsible antibiotic use. The messages are targeted to both human patients and animal owners, so the BVA is keen for practice staff to introduce themselves to their local GP surgery, show them the poster and invite them to display it in their own waiting rooms. For veterinary nurses looking to learn more about infection control and AMR, The Bella Moss Foundation is a charity worth knowing about. Founded by Jill Moss, in 2005, after her dog Bella died of drug-resistant MRSA, the charity's mission is to educate and support veterinary professionals and pet owners, on how to prevent and treat multi-resistant bacterial (MRSA) infections. The Foundation's website, Veterinary Nurse Training Online, hosts a range of resources including training guidelines on MRSA in veterinary practice, downloadable infection control guidelines and videos on correct hand-washing techniques. The BVNA also has an Infection Control for Practice Standards course. The online course offers accredited CPD for vets and veterinary nurses and the next one is scheduled to begin in August if you are keen to sign up.

Moving further afield, we often associate charities like Mission Rabies and Brooke with the topic of One Health. Mission Rabies was founded by Luke Gamble, founder also of the animal welfare charity, Worldwide Veterinary Service (WVS). It was during the scope of his work with WVS that Mr Gamble witnessed some of the catastrophic effects rabies has on people and animals. Across the world 100 children die every day from rabies and India is particularly affected. Mission Rabies started with pilot projects across India and now also runs campaigns in Malawi, Uganda, Tanzania and Sri Lanka, coordinating permanent vaccination teams and mobile veterinary units that carry out mass rabies vaccination and mass sterilisation, saving the lives of literally thousands of people and dogs every year.

Brooke is an international animal welfare charity that works on improving lives for working horses, donkeys and mules and the people that depend on them. It has projects in the Middle East, across Asia, Africa and Latin America. Community work is at the heart of what Brooke does. It recognises the importance of healthy working animals on peoples' livelihoods, as well as acknowledging the vital importance of the individual animals' welfare. Going into communities and empowering people to take better care of their animals, offering them both the knowledge and equipment required to make key health and welfare changes, has enabled them to improve the lives of millions of working horses, donkeys and mules. Both charities have numerous ways you can help support their One Health projects, from volunteering on a Mission Rabies programme to vaccinate and sterilise dogs, to being a responsible tourist, or simply fundraising to generate funds and awareness for the organisations and the work they do.

As dedicated animal welfare professionals, veterinary nurses should be striving to push the RVN qualification and recognition for all that it encompasses forward at every level. It may have been challenging up until now to see the importance of One Health, both to us as individuals and to the wider profession, but a realisation has begun and a great team of people are working hard to help everyone in nursing get more involved.

One Health is dog-bite prevention and infection control in veterinary practice, it is AMR and its potential significance to our future health, and it is preventing unnecessary deaths from diseases like rabies. The One Health Initiative encompasses human health, animal health, human welfare and animal welfare, and as vital members of the veterinary profession it is essential we appreciate and value how much we have to offer to the One Health community in terms of knowledge and expertise.

Being involved in One Health is another chance for nurses to gain a wider role in practice, the opportunity to specialise, to take on more responsibility and to learn from medical partners, as well as grabbing the chance to teach them about key aspects of animal health and welfare – thus improving our own veterinary environment and the service we can offer our clients. With VN Futures taking such a dedicated approach to the future careers of veterinary nurses and giving us the chance to have a real impact on how we shape our profession, we owe it to ourselves and to the next generation of RVNs to encourage each other to do just one thing for One Health. Let that one thing be the start of many future partnerships and ventures which will benefit not only ourselves, but also the animals we dedicate our lives to, their owners and the wider human population.

If you would like to offer your thoughts and ideas on potential One Health Initiative collaborations or future projects, or if you would like to highlight a project you are already running to raise further awareness of One Health, you can email Julie Dugmore, RCVS director of veterinary nursing, at j.dugmore@rcvs.org.uk.

For copies of the BVA's AMR poster, email the team at: marketing@bva.co.uk

Further Information

- www.onehealthinitiative.com
- www.vetfutures.org.uk/vnfutures
- http://vetfutures.org.uk/download/publications/VN%20%20futures%20report(3).pdf
- www.bva.co.uk/uploadedFiles/Content/News,_campaigns_and_policies/Campaigns/bva-manifesto-2015.pdf
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