

Dr. Paul Cadogan

There was an incident a few years back in which two monkeys were smuggled into the island on a fishing boat. One died and the other escaped into the trees. The authorities were alerted and given the risk posed by this misguided act, the police were called in and the poor, innocent monkey had to be shot. The dead animals were collected by a field officer from the National Environment & Planning Agency and taken to the parish Health Department where they were seen by both the Medical Officer of Health and the Local Veterinary Inspector, the latter taking possession of the carcasses to transport them the Veterinary Services Division for examination and disposal.



A TV correspondent was there to record the scene, and on the news that night, the physician, the veterinarian and the environmental professional were shown working together to deal with the problem – the introduction of a potentially invasive species which could easily be carrying serious, deadly diseases that could affect our animals and us. It was indeed a One Health moment.

The evolution of the concept of “One Medicine” began in the late 1990’s into the early 2000’s when the emergence of several infectious diseases of global significance affecting both humans and animals brought the recognition of the natural linkage of the work of physicians and veterinarians - the only separation being the former focused on humans, the latter on all the other animal species. The recognition of the overarching role of the environment brought the related professions into the picture and One Health was born.

Since then all the major world regulatory bodies and many countries have formally adopted the One Health approach. In 2009 a One Health Office was established by the United States Centers for Disease Control, in 2010 the European Union committed to One Health, in 2010 the World Health Organization

(WHO), the World organization for Animal Health (OIE) and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) signed the Tripartite Concept Note. In 2014, the One Health One Caribbean One Love project was initiated (www.onehealthcaribbean.org).

But One Health is not just about governments, organizations and policies, important though they are. It is also about the individual - the physician, the nurse, the environmental officer, the veterinarian, the dentist, the pharmacist, the public health inspector, the agriculturalist, the forest ranger, the wildlife biologist and all involved persons recognizing that their individual roles are part of the whole. One Health is therefore a necessary part of the undergraduate curricula and continuing professional education programmes for our health professionals. Mutual respect and, collaboration at the individual level are vital for our One World. After all, “Health rests in all our hands”.

