



American Academy
of Pediatrics



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The Value of Professional Collaboration in Protecting the Health of People and Animals

A Joint Statement from the American Veterinary Medical Association and American Academy of Pediatrics

Humans and animals have much in common. They share issues of health and disease and co-exist in common environments. Advancing technologies and science-based evidence are increasing awareness, knowledge, and understanding of these interdependencies, further supporting the concept of “One Health.”

Veterinarians and physicians are increasingly focused on the benefits of healthy lifestyles and environments, with an emphasis on preventive care that promotes the physical and mental health of their patients. Effective guidance addresses not only concerns about diseases that can be communicated between people and animals, but also lifestyle choices and environmental exposures that may affect both. As highly trained and skilled medical personnel, physicians and veterinarians actively provide the care their patients need on a daily basis. As professionals, veterinarians and physicians have an obligation to create opportunities to work more closely together to benefit their patients, families, and communities.

With this in mind, representatives of the American Academy of Pediatrics and American Veterinary Medical Association met recently at AVMA headquarters in Schaumburg, Illinois to discuss potential opportunities for collaboration, including participation in cross-disciplinary campaigns and projects designed to share information with veterinarians and physicians, as well as the public. Conversations during the meeting were far-reaching and the following areas were identified as ripe for collaboration:

Healthy pets as members of healthy households

The responsibility of caring for pets can provide their owners with a sense of purpose and a perceived need to take better care of themselves. The benefits of these relationships, however, depend on appropriate matches between pet and owner, and ongoing support to ensure both stay physically and mentally healthy.

Health of people is tied to the safety and quality of the food they consume

Veterinarians have long been guardians of food safety and quality through protecting and improving the health and welfare of animals destined for food production and by active participation in food inspection activities. Both physicians and veterinarians have played important roles in routinely educating consumers on the importance of food safety to their health and providing advice on nutrition for their respective patient populations. Consumers are increasingly interested in understanding how their food is produced and its role in healthy lifestyles.

Zoonotic disease

Estimates suggest that at least 75% of emerging and re-emerging diseases are zoonotic (spread between humans and animals [e.g., rabies, *Salmonella*]), including many that are vector-borne (carried from infected animals to others through insects [e.g., Lyme disease]).

Animals in the service of people

Animals assist humans as service, assistance, and therapy animals. Veterinarians and physicians can work together to ensure that these animals are properly placed and supported.

Environments and lifestyle choices impacting people and animals

Human and animal patients share the same environments, thus will be exposed to similar hazards such as asbestos, lead, second-hand smoke, the consequences of recreational drug use, and domestic violence.

Responsible use of antimicrobials and antimicrobial resistance

As medical professionals, physicians and veterinarians recognize a shared responsibility for the judicious use of antimicrobials and combatting antimicrobial resistance.

Professional wellness

The physical and mental demands placed on physicians and veterinarians as they care for their patients can be considerable, and the wellness of the professionals directly impacts the care of their patients. As members of the healing professions, veterinarians and physicians need to care for not only their patients, but also themselves.

The American Veterinary Medical Association and American Academy of Pediatrics recognize the tremendous benefits that can accrue from more collaboration between physicians and veterinarians. Our medical professions can and should commit to greater sharing of our scientific knowledge and practical expertise. By working collaboratively on initiatives that build bridges across disciplines, and by serving as valuable sources of information for each other, we can protect, promote, and advance the health of all members of our communities—human and animal. Our associations are committed to creating such opportunities.



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