



Heather Fowler, VMD, PhD, recently received her PhD in Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences through the Center for One Health Research at the University of Washington (UW). Mentored by Peter Rabinowitz, M.D., MPH, she received the coveted [Gilbert S. Omenn 2017 Award for Academic Excellence](#) among hundreds in the UW School of Public Health, and gave the student address at the June graduation ceremony.

[Video](#)

Transcript

I was drawn to the field of public and environmental health through my love for animals, and my training as a veterinarian. Veterinarians, perhaps more than other health care practitioners are trained to understand and manage the many aspects of their patients' environment, knowing that no amount of medication or surgery can compensate for unhealthy surroundings. Furthermore, we are trained in a comparative approach to health, knowing that if one type of animal is experiencing health problems, the case may hold important lessons for other species as well including humans.

I now stand before you a *One Health* researcher ready to take on the world and solve some of its greatest public health issues and I encourage you to join me in this fight. But, what *is* One Health?

One Health is a research approach that recognizes that the health of people, animals and the environment are inextricably linked. As a result, this approach implores researchers to collaborate with others and extend their reach beyond their home disciplines in order to address the world's emerging and complex issues. Historically this approach has been reserved for the realm of infectious disease with an emphasis on those diseases shared between humans and animals known as zoonotic diseases.

But One Health is so much more than just zoonotic diseases. One Health can be used to address safety practices in animal worker settings, (my dissertation work), global food security concerns, the impact of climate change on health as well as a plethora of other topics where these three sectors of health collide.

The degrees that each of you leave with today are critical to solving major public health issues but I maintain that you cannot do it alone. Thus, I encourage you to carry the One Health banner with me. Whether you've studied social determinants of health, behavior theory, malnutrition, environmental health, epidemiology of infectious disease, public health genetics, biostatistics, et cetera. we all have a major role to play in improving public health.

Let us work together not just across our disciplines but transcending them, engaging (our) urban, rural, local, national, and international communities in the fight to improve public health. Together we can make a difference and I wholeheartedly believe it is through One Health that we can save the world. JOIN ME.

YouTube video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4V6JAXfbgpk>