

Recent studies show the collaboration of human and animal health practitioners has advanced science and improved the overall health of communities. Emerging diseases such as avian influenza, Ebola and Zika have highlighted the gaps present between the veterinary and medical professions and the need for more collaborative efforts. Disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and Harvey stressed the importance of the human-animal bond aspect during disaster preparedness and recovery. Harris County Veterinary Public Health (HCVPH), a division of the local health department Harris County Public Health, has created an opportunity to address this issue in order to build a healthier, more resilient community in the Houston, Texas area.



attendees covering critical and relevant public health and zoonotic disease information. The annual conferences covered a variety of zoonotic disease topics including rabies, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Zika, MRSA and leptospirosis. Yearly attendee surveys showed a dramatic increase in zoonotic disease understanding, and the popularity of the conference increased via word-of-mouth. Not only did the conference grow in size, but it also reached new areas of interest in the community: human health

In 2008, HCVPH surveyed local veterinarians and veterinary technicians. Survey results depicted gaps in awareness and education within the veterinary community on zoonotic and infectious diseases. In order to address this issue, HCVPH organized and executed the 1st Annual Zoonotic Disease Conference specifically aimed at veterinarians, licensed veterinary technicians and clinic staff. The 1st Annual Zoonotic Disease Conference held March 28, 2009 offered 6 continuing education (CE) hours to 88



professionals wanted to attend. After several years of collaboration with Baylor College of Medicine-National School of Tropical Medicine in the renowned Houston medical center, the 10th annual conference in 2017 celebrated wonderful, exciting changes.

The 10th annual conference held September 30 – October 1, 2017 changed its name to the One Health Conference, included over 325 attendees from a variety of health professions, and offered

CE credits to physicians and nurses for the first time. It included zoonotic disease topics such as Toxoplasmosis from a veterinarian and physician's perspective, but also highlighted topics such as One Health, the human-animal bond, antibiotic resistance and environmental health. It became the first One Health conference in the Houston area bringing together animal and human health professionals under one roof to promote collaborations. Veterinarians, physicians, nurses, researchers, public health professionals and students networked, discussed similarities and differences in human and animal medicine, and received up to 14 hours of CE over two days of lectures, panel sessions and presentations.



Collaborations between human and animal health professionals can make a significant impact in the Houston community and result in a healthier human and animal population. Through this annual conference, HCVPH has been able to develop a comprehensive network of One Health stakeholders, educate the veterinary and medical community and establish HCVPH as the local resource for zoonotic disease issues. This is a summary of one health department's journey to promote the One Health Concept and put it into practice.