

A call for a veterinary public health component to the peoples open access education initiative: Peoples-uni

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Most low to middle income countries have to cope with a wide range of health problems that interfere with their future economic development. A trained workforce of health professionals is essential to improve the health of the population, however human resources for health are limited for a number of reasons. The Peoples Open Access Education Initiative (Peoples-uni) is a global digital partnership that aims to offer high quality and low cost education in Public Health by identification, utilisation and online facilitation of open access resources (<http://peoples-uni.org>) (Heller et al., 2007; Reynolds and Heller, 2008).

The education is based on high quality open access materials, and involves a range of academics and Public Health professionals from across the globe. An international faculty have come together to volunteer to be involved in the Peoples-uni, and awards at the Certificate and Diploma level are provided. The education covers both the 'foundation sciences' of Public Health, and the major health problems faced in low- to middle-income countries, and is targeted at meeting the competences required to tackle these issues. Following an encouraging pilot course module, 117 students from 23 countries have enrolled in the first set of 6 course modules, and expressions of interest for future enrolments are high.

Increasing recognition of zoonoses as important sources of disease, along with numerous calls for the integration of human and veterinary medicine, in line with the 'one-health' approach (Zinsstag et al., 2005) identifies veterinary Public Health as an important component of an initiative such as this. The addition of modules reflecting veterinary perspectives and approaches will allow the Peoples-uni courses to broaden their appeal to those concerned with human Public Health as well as offering capacity building for those whose primary concern is veterinary Public Health.

This paper represents a call for collaboration from organisations and individuals from the field of veterinary Public Health. Volunteer faculty would participate in module development and online facilitation – this can involve as little as two hours a week for a two week period. In 'exchange', volunteers become part of a high quality collaborative international faculty helping to build Public Health capacity where it is most needed.

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Zinsstag, J., Schelling, E., Wyss, K., Mahamat, M.B., 2005, Potential of cooperation between human and animal health to strengthen health systems. Lancet 366, 2142-2145.