

# Environmental Health Makes a Strong Entry Into the Global One Health Framework in Jamaica

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## Introduction

Globally, the environmental health discipline is rapidly being recognized as a critical science-based discipline needed for protecting human, animal, and ecological health. Such recognition and tremendous excitement were achieved as over 400 academicians and practitioners convened in October 2017 at the beautiful seaside Hilton Rose Hall Resort & Spa in Montego Bay, Jamaica, for the largest and first environmental health conference of its kind on One Health to occur worldwide.

Such recognition and enthusiasm by those outside environmental health add value to our profession, and our partners in One Health (e.g., veterinarians, medical doctors, nurses, academicians) can better advocate for our efforts when they know our stories. The same is true for how we can work and communicate to elevate our partners to support One Health disciplines. Collectively, we know that inherent in our DNA as environmental health professionals is the power to partner. Such is also true for natural partners from other professions embracing One Health (Gibbs, 2014). The One Health Initiative describes the One Health concept as “a worldwide strategy for expanding interdisciplinary collaborations and communications in all aspects of health-care for humans, animals, and the environment” (One Health Initiative, n.d.). If we successfully work together, we will protect and save millions of lives across the generations.

## Conference Summary

The One Health: One Global Environment Conference represented the 2017 International Federation of Environmental Health's (IFEH) Academic World Conference and Global Environmental Health Faculty Forum. Directed by the Americas Region of IFEH and the Jamaica Association of Public Health Inspe-



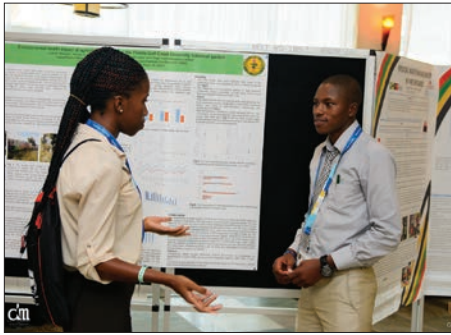
Bay-C, internationally acclaimed reggae artist, performs at the conference opening and gets a bit of audience participation on stage. Photo courtesy of Donovan Morrison, DA. Morrison Photography.

ctors (JAPHI), the conference attracted over 90 submissions for presentations and resulted in 54 presentations. JAPHI netted a surplus from hosting the event and was able to match donations from IFEH leadership gifts to provide financial support to Caribbean hurricane recovery efforts. A community service donation project was also planned and approved to follow the conference. Attendees of the conference enjoyed the culture of Jamaica throughout in music, food, and the environment.

The opening ceremony included, Dr. Christopher Tufton, Jamaican Minister of Health, and other national leaders from food safety, environmental health, and veterinary communities. In addition, much excitement erupted as Bay-C, internationally acclaimed reggae artist and One Health ambassador, provided a musical performance regarding

mosquito-borne diseases and “One Health, One Love” (see photo above).

Dr. Cheryl Stroud, executive director of the One Health Commission, welcomed the environmental health community to One Health while highlighting the role of animals as sentinels for emerging environmental health challenges related to chemical and biological hazards. Dr. Armando Hoet, director of the Veterinary Public Health Program at The Ohio State University, described relationships between environmental health and the spread of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* and other antibiotic resistant pathogens in a variety of settings such as hospitals and buses (Lutz et al., 2014). Dr. David Dyjack, executive director of the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA), spoke to the need for the enviro-



One of the many posters displayed at the conference that provided stimulating conversation between attendees and presenters alike. Photo courtesy of Donovan Morrison, DA. Morrison Photography.

mental health profession to develop friendships and partnerships outside the profession, and described how environmental health professionals are uniquely positioned to be One Health leaders in their local communities. Dr. R. Gregory from the Veterinary Services Division of the Jamaican Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture, and Fisheries provided an overview of the One Health movement in Jamaica, including efforts by the government to secure optimal health for humans and animals.

Exciting food safety trainings were also provided by Melissa Vaccaro of PTI Consulting. Dr. Matt Levine of the U.S. Army provided dynamic remarks regarding the importance of environmental health for promoting security and maintaining health among military personnel. Dr. Bryan Brooks of Baylor University organized sessions with world renown environmental chemists and toxicologists related to chemical risks and their relationships to human health and One Health. Drs. Timothy Murphy, Gary Brown, Carolyn Harvey, and Priscilla Oliver provided strategies for enhancing diversity in the profession integrating One Health concepts into existing science-based environmental health curricula.

Numerous presentations that provided case studies from Jamaica were well attended by the international audience that included attendees from all continents except Antarctica (see photo above). Photos and more information, including abstracts from the presentations and posters, can be found on the One Health: One Global Environment Conference website at [www.onehealthconference.com](http://www.onehealthconference.com).

## Partnerships

The conference enjoyed support from the international planning committee and a local committee comprised of JAPHI member. Fourteen other organizations provided in-kind or monetary support. Notable financial contributions from corporate sponsors Hedgerow Software Ltd. and NSF International enabled several practitioners to attend the conference. Financial support for printing was provided by the Pan American Health Organization, Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization. Conference organizers also benefited from NEHA and its *Journal of Environmental Health* for conference promotion.

## Student Participation

Extra energy at the conference was provided by 35 student attendees, of which 31 participated in a study abroad course offered through Eastern Kentucky University. With support from JAPHI and the University of the West Indies, tours were arranged by public health inspectors that enabled students with faculty supervisors to observe operations at meat production facilities, food distribution centers, a drinking water treatment plant, and a wastewater plant. A trip highlight for students was the opportunity to assist JAPHI members in the construction of a vault pit latrine for a 83-year old Rastafarian gentlemen living in a nearby mountain forest area (Eastern Kentucky University, 2018). The tours were unforgettable learning experiences for these future environmental and public health professionals.

## The Work Continues

The events that unfolded at Montego Bay mark the start of a new era for environmental health in the Americas and abroad. As many diseases here and globally move with little or no regard for species barriers and human-constructed boundaries, we as a profession need to be flexible in our thoughts and actions. In a world that is getting closer, warmer, and more easily connected by rapid transportation, we must strive to continue to work together with our allies in One Health including, but not limited to, human, veterinary, and wildlife medicine. These partnerships provide greater hope for our profession to achieve health goals in this rapidly changing world. Among all that was accomplished

and discussed, the most important aspect of what occurred at this conference was that we celebrated environmental health as an active member and viable resource in the One Health community.

Moving forward there is tremendous enthusiasm stemming from those who attended the conference. As environmental health professionals, many of us have already embraced One Health whether or not we knew the term. To learn more about One Health, visit the One Health Commission (<http://onehealthcommission.org>) or One Health Initiative (<http://onehealthinitiative.com>) websites.

You are also invited to join us in Montego Bay in 2020 for our second and even larger One Health: One Global Environment Conference. The University of the West Indies' senior leadership and the Jamaican Ministry of Health have partnered with us to encourage and maintain steadfast momentum for this noteworthy cause of enhancing the protection of public health and the environment. For additional information and to join us, please contact Dr. Jason Marion at [jason.marion@eku.edu](mailto:jason.marion@eku.edu). 🇵🇸

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