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Sustainable Veterinary Communities - A Stalwart of Veterinary Public Health in India: Prof. Dr. Mahendra Pal

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Abstract

Sustainable veterinary communities are vital pillars in safeguarding public health and promoting equitable animal and human welfare. This presentation highlights the pioneering efforts of Prof. Dr. Mahendra Pal in establishing and strengthening veterinary public health initiatives across India. Emphasizing the importance of integrated approaches, community engagement, and capacity building, his work underscores the role of veterinary professionals in addressing zoonotic diseases, ensuring food safety, and fostering sustainable livestock practices. Through innovative strategies and dedicated leadership, Prof. Dr. Mahendra Pal has contributed significantly to creating resilient veterinary communities that serve as stalwarts in India's public health landscape. This paper explores the key principles, achievements, and future prospects of sustainable veterinary communities as foundational elements of veterinary public health in India.

Keywords: Public health, surveillance, sustainable veterinary communities, epidemiology, zoonosis

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1. INTRODUCTION

Veterinary Public Health (VPH) occupies a crucial position at the crossroads of human well-being, animal health, and environmental sustainability, especially in the post-pandemic context where safeguarding veterinary communities remains vital [11-20]. In India, where zoonotic diseases, food safety concerns, and novel pathogens continuously threaten public health, the efforts of dedicated scientists are of immense importance. Among these distinguished figures, Prof. Dr. Mahendra Pal emerges as a prominent personality whose lifelong dedication to education, research, and scientific dissemination has significantly bolstered Veterinary Public Health initiatives in India and internationally, including at JEETHP.

Prof. Dr. Mahendra Pal is globally acclaimed for his pioneering work in zoonotic infections, mycology, food safety, foodborne illnesses, occupational and environmental health, microbiology, and the One Health approach. Over a career spanning many decades, he has established himself as one of the most influential and respected authorities in veterinary public health within the country.

A significant portion of Prof. Pal's career has been devoted to teaching and mentoring students in veterinary and life sciences. Renowned for his clarity of communication, disciplined methodology, and profound expertise, he has inspired countless undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral scholars. He has delivered numerous guest lectures across Indian and international institutions—such as in New Zealand, Belgium, Japan, and Ethiopia—highlighting the practical relevance of Veterinary Public Health and connecting academic concepts with real-world health challenges.

He pioneered the introduction of the Ph.D. program in Veterinary Public Health at the College of Veterinary Science, Anand, Gujarat, India. Additionally, he restructured the MSc curriculum in Veterinary Public Health and played a key role in establishing the first Ph.D. program in this field at Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia. Many of his students now hold prominent positions in academia, research agencies, public health sectors, and veterinary services both nationally and internationally. His mentorship extends beyond formal education, as he continuously guides emerging researchers with patience, scholarly rigor, and encouragement.

One of Prof. Pal's most significant scientific contributions lies in the field of zoonotic

diseases, particularly fungal zoonoses. At a time when fungal infections were often neglected in public health discourse, he emphasized their importance as emerging and re-emerging threats. His research has enhanced understanding of diseases, such as cryptococcosis, candidiasis, aspergillosis, dermatophytosis, and other fungal zoonoses affecting both humans and animals [1-10]. Several technologies, such as “**Pal sunflower seed medium**”, “**Modified Pal medium**”, “**PHOL**” (**Pal, Hasegawa, Ono, and Lee**), “**APRM agar**” and “**Narayan stain**” developed by Prof. Pal is globally used in public health and microbiology for the study of mycozoonoses that causes life-threatening infections.

2. PUBLIC HEALTH PROTECTION

The role of rigorous scientific research is fundamental to safeguarding public health. Prof. Pal has made significant contributions, particularly in studying foodborne pathogens, emphasizing their importance and advocating for preventive measures from farm to fork. His work has helped bridge the gap between veterinary and human medicine, emphasizing the interconnectedness of health systems.

Long before the One Health approach gained global prominence, Prof. Dr. Mahendra Pal being a champion, consistently advocated for interdisciplinary collaboration among veterinarians, physicians, microbiologists, environmental scientists, and public health professionals in his several publications since 2005. Through his writings and lectures, he has underscored that effective control of zoonoses and food-borne diseases is impossible without a unified One Health frame work. He always emphasized that “**Veterinarians**” are the key players in One Health Programme.

His efforts have played a crucial role in promoting awareness of One Health among students, researchers, and policymakers, particularly in developing countries where zoonotic diseases impose a heavy burden on public health and the economy.

Prof. Pal is widely admired for his extraordinary contribution to scientific writing. He has authored and co-authored hundreds of research papers, review articles, book chapters, and monographs published in reputed national and international journals. His publications are known for their clarity, accuracy, and strong public health relevance. Currently, he has over 825 publications

and 9 books to his credit. In addition, he has served in various editorial capacities, contributing to the maintenance of scientific standards and the dissemination of quality research.

The scientific work of Prof. Dr. Mahendra Pal has earned him international recognition, with collaborations and citations spanning multiple continents. Despite his global standing, he has always remained deeply connected to the needs of Indian public health and veterinary education. Prof has collaboration with the scientists of many countries, such as Brazil, Hungary, Spain, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Japan, Iran, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, South Korea, Georgia, Indonesia, USA, Nepal, and Greece.

Beyond academia, Prof. Pal has actively contributed to public awareness, emphasizing hygiene, food safety, zoonotic disease prevention, and responsible animal management. His writings often reflect a strong sense of social responsibility, aiming to translate scientific knowledge into public benefit. His work has been cited, read, and recommended by around 2.5 million scientists and academicians of over 215 nations of the world.

Even after decades of service, Prof. Dr. Mahendra Pal continues to remain intellectually active, assisting researchers, reviewing manuscripts, and contributing scholarly articles by launching Narayan Consultancy on Veterinary Public Health to give free technical expertise to the students, researchers, scientists, teachers, and academicians. His humility, discipline, and unwavering dedication to science make him not only a respected scientist but also a role model for the academic community.

Prof. Dr. Mahendra Pal has been honoured with many prestigious awards namely **“Padma Shri Award in Science”, “Distinguished Scientist Award”, “Outstanding Veterinarian Award”, “Life Time Achievement Award”, “Jawaharlal Nehru Award”, Distinguished Teacher Award”, “International Achievement Award and others”**. Prof. Pal’s life and career exemplify **excellence in Veterinary Public Health**. Recently, The Indian Association of Veterinary Public Health Specialists (IAVPHS) has instituted an award on his name to remember his long-lasting contribution in the field of Veterinary Public Health. The name of award is **“Prof. Mahendra Pal Zoonoses Award”** that is presented every year to a scientist for his pioneer work at the National Conference of IAVPHS. Considering his last 55 years of pioneer, significant, commendable, and outstanding contribution, Prof. Pal should be recognised as a **“Father of Veterinary Public Health in India”**. As a teacher, researcher, author,

and mentor, he has made lasting contributions to science and society. His work has strengthened India’s capacity to understand and combat zoonotic and food-borne diseases while nurturing a generation of professionals committed to the One Health vision.

At a time when global health challenges demand integrated and evidence-based solutions, the contributions of stalwarts like Prof. Dr. Mahendra Pal continue to illuminate the path forward. His legacy will undoubtedly inspire future generations to serve public health with knowledge, integrity, and compassion.

We congratulate Prof. Dr. Mahendra Pal for his persistent outstanding contribution in the last 55 years. We wish him a happy and healthy long life so that he may continue to impart his knowledge for the benefit to the global scientific community.

In conclusion, Prof. Dr. Mahendra Pal's remarkable 55-year dedication to advancing veterinary science exemplifies unwavering commitment and excellence. His enduring contributions have significantly strengthened veterinary public health in India and globally, establishing him as a stalwart in the field. We extend our heartfelt congratulations and best wishes for his continued health and vitality, confident that his ongoing efforts will further benefit the global scientific and veterinary communities.

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