

100 Conversations About One Health = 100 Surprises

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SPEAKERS

Kinari Webb, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, Ikura Okeke, John Green, Richard Webby, Maggie Fox

Maggie Fox 00:01

Hello, and welcome to One World, One Health. I'm Maggie Fox. This is a podcast where we talk to people finding solutions to the world's biggest problems — infectious diseases, climate change, pollution, and the conflicts that result from all of these things. It's brought to you by the One Health Trust.

We have officially put out 100 episodes of One World, One Health. So, we decided to commemorate this milestone. Since July of 2022, we've recorded 100 different bite-sized chats touching on the fascinating world of One Health. Our producer, Sam Serrano, and I went through to find some of the most memorable episodes to highlight.

One Health is a concept that we're all in this together, that the animals, plants, people, climate, and environment are connected, and we all affect one another. One Health problem requires solutions that keep these links in mind.

I was surprised, or maybe not, to find the same theme over and over again. People found that when they listened, really listened to those they were trying to help, they usually learnt something that they had not known before. The experts don't know everything! The very first example came with our first episode with Dr. Kinari Webb. She's the founder of Health in Harmony, an international nonprofit dedicated to reversing global heating. She was looking to help orangutans in Borneo, and couldn't figure out why people living in rainforests there were cutting down the big trees that orangutans live in.

Her big surprise — people knew it was a mistake to cut down the forests. It really messed up the whole environment, but they needed to sell the wood to pay for healthcare.

The solution — a clinic where people can pay with seedlings, labor, manure, or other non-cash trade.

Kinari Webb 02:10

Amazingly, 10 years later, we had a 90 percent drop in logging households. We had a stabilization of the loss of the primary forest that saved US\$ 65 million worth of carbon. There were also 52,000 acres of rainforest that grew back, and at the same time, there were across-the-board improvements in health, including a 67 percent drop in infant mortality. What that just basically says to me is the communities were right; they knew exactly what the solutions were.

Maggie Fox 02:38

So good things happen when people listen, and when people don't, we had a former world leader tell us in very frank terms. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, co-chair of the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board and the former President of Croatia, explained to us in February of 2024 that her team of experts had warned of a pandemic just months before COVID-19 broke out. Worse, she told us, not much has changed, even after millions of people died.

Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović 03:16

The Global Preparedness Monitoring Board (GPMB) report of 2019 warned of an imminent pandemic of a respiratory illness, and we saw COVID-19 strike just weeks after the report was issued, and the world was not prepared then. Today, not enough has changed, despite the catastrophic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Maggie Fox 03:39

And of course, listening is, in the end, about gathering information. That's what Dr. Iruka Okeke advocated for in one of our many episodes, looking at the problem of antimicrobial resistance, the growth of drug-resistant bacteria, viruses, and fungi. Dr. Okeke is a professor at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria and helped write a report about the importance of surveillance.

Ikura Okeke 04:11

Many, many years ago, when I was a student, I heard a health policy person say, "You know, if you're playing tennis and you're not keeping score, you're just practicing." If you're doing the real thing, you'll be keeping score, and so if you're really going to be serious about doing something about antimicrobial resistance, we need to know how big the problem is, whether it's getting worse, and whether the things that we do are actually helping, and without surveillance we can't do any of those things.

Maggie Fox 04:36

And while we worry about new diseases that pass from people to animals and animals to people. We've talked to experts about Ebola, hantavirus, COVID-19, Zika, and antibiotic-resistant infections. We cannot forget age-old enemies either.

In 2025, writer John Green joined us to talk about his book, "Everything is Tuberculosis."

John Green 05:03

I really hope that I can increase awareness around the world's deadliest infectious disease. I mean, in 2019 I had no idea that tuberculosis is still killing over a million people every year, and it's infecting and sickening over 10 million every year. And so, I think it's really important to get the word out about that to help us understand that this is a crisis. This is an ongoing pandemic, and one that we have the tools to address effectively.

Maggie Fox 05:27

And if there's a poster child for One Health, it might be avian influenza or bird flu. It's a virus that passes from animals to people and back again, and it's one that is absolutely affected by human agricultural practices.

In April of 2024, we had one of the world's top flu experts explain to us why H5N1 avian influenza has kept doctors, vets, and epidemiologists on their toes for 30 years. Dr. Richard Webby of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee, studies all sorts of flu viruses, and he says H5N1 surprised even him when it turned up on dairy farms.

Richard Webby 06:10

Maybe this is going to destroy everything you just said about how much of an expert I am, because I could have sworn that this virus was not going to turn up in cows.

Maggie Fox 06:19

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