The concept of “One Health” is now used to highlight the inextricable links among the health of humans, animals and the ecosystems we inhabit. Humans and animals have been exchanging pathogens for millennia. While many endemic infectious diseases of humans have been largely contained, new microbes continue to emerge to threaten human and animal health. Sources of such emerging infectious diseases are not confined to humans and their livestock but also extend to wildlife ecosystems, whose finely-tuned dynamic balance is destabilised by human interventions. The emergence and response to avian influenza H5N1 and H7N9, swine influenza, SARS and MERS will be used as examples to illustrate the need for close collaboration between those working in public health, animal health and environmental sciences. Such collaboration has to be based on mutual trust and respect and needs to be operative at all levels of the relevant organizations, starting with (but not limited to) undergraduate and postgraduate education.

References: