Soulsby Fellowships awarded for One Health projects on zoonotic diseases, sustainable food production and food poverty

Covid pandemic highlights the importance of research that spans human, animal and environmental health.

Researchers working across the wide range of One Health issues have been awarded fellowship funds to allow them to progress their research.

Five fellowships, in total worth £50,000, have been awarded to support research into zoonotic disease, maternal health, sustainable food production and biodiversity.

The fellowships are awarded by the Soulsby Foundation – a charity that supports researchers, particularly those early in their career, working on One Health projects.

Lisa Cavalerie (University of Liverpool) is using the fellowship to study the benefits and risks of livestock ownership to maternal health in women in Ethiopia. ‘The aim of the study will be to develop sustainable livestock health management to improve both maternal and child health’ said Cavalerie.

Vito Collela (University of Melbourne, Australia) is determining whether targeting dogs in Cambodia is more effective at controlling hookworms in children than human-targeted strategies alone. ‘The canine hookworm is the second most common hookworm of people in the Asia-Pacific region and causes serious blood loss and anaemia, particularly in children’ says Colella. ‘This pilot study will assess the impact of mass deworming of dogs on the proportion of children infected and will analyse the cost-effectiveness of this approach’.

Mark Nanyingi (Universities of Liverpool and Nairobi, Kenya) is investigating the presence of Rift Valley fever virus (RVFV) in people, livestock and mosquitoes in Kenya. He aims to develop a human-animal integrated surveillance system which will inform national policy and decision making in the event of outbreaks. ‘This study will enhance our understanding of the geographical risk, distribution and genetic diversity of the virus’ says Nanyingi.

Kelsey Shaw (Emory University, USA) will study schistosomiasis, also known as bilharzia. ‘Despite decades of control efforts, schistosomiasis cases remain high in Tanzania’ she says. ‘Snails transmit schistosomes, but pesticides used to kill the snails also kill other species including snail predators’ she says. Shaw’s project will investigate whether this reduced biodiversity actually leads to increased transmission of schistosomes both to humans and to livestock.

Juan Pablo Villanueva-Cabezas (Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity, Australia) is studying milk production systems in Bhutan with a view to improving both cattle and human health, ‘Milk producers in the region have had some success in establishing milk cooperatives’ says Villanueva-Cabezas, ‘but limited access to animal feed and various health issues including zoonotic diseases have undermined their success’. Instead of focusing of disease pathogens, Villanueva-Cabezas will be considering animal husbandry and food safety practices as well as promoting general awareness of zoonotic diseases.

Chair of the Soulsby Foundation trustees, Judy MacArthur Clark, said: ‘The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the intimate link between animals and humans in emerging diseases. This emphasises the importance of a One Health approach so firmly advocated by Lord Soulsby in which veterinary and medical health professionals work together to find solutions. These 2020 Soulsby Fellows are remarkable examples of how a One Health approach benefits humans, animals and the communities in which they live. They are potential future leaders who will enable us to better respond to future pandemics.'
Notes for editors
This year five Soulsby Fellowships have been awarded by the Soulsby Foundation.

Application for these Fellowships is highly competitive; the Fellowships are awarded for those proposing impactful projects in the area of One Health. A One Health approach seeks solutions which combine consideration of health from a human, animal and environmental perspective.

For further information on the projects and current and past recipients of the fellowships please contact the Soulsby Foundation.

Applications for the 2021 Fellowships will open in the autumn of 2020 and close end of January 2021.

About the Soulsby Foundation
The Soulsby Foundation, established by Lord Soulsby of Swaffham Prior in 2016, provides travelling research fellowships known as Soulsby Fellowships to medical doctors and veterinarians undertaking a project in the field of One Health. The trustees aim to award up to five Soulsby Fellowships annually through a competitive application process. Each fellowship is likely to be between £10,000 and £15,000 in value to cover travel and subsistence expenses in carrying out the project.

The Foundation is registered with the Charity Commission as an independent charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) working in close association with other like-minded organisations including the Royal Society of Medicine, the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine & Hygiene.

Lord Soulsby is unique in having been president of both the RSM and the RCVS and the involvement of both, together with RSTMH, emphasises the essential link between the two medical professions, at home and overseas.

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