

# **Preparedness and disaster response training for veterinary students: A model for academic change through partnership, collaboration, and innovation**

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## **Abstract:** Background

The nation's veterinary colleges lack curricula necessary to meet veterinary demands for animal public health and emergency preparedness. A One Health (OH) perspective, which is a collaborative effort of multiple disciplines to promote the optimal health of people, animals, and the environment, could provide the basis for such a training program. To this end, this dissertation explores whether novel thinking and skills, strongly related to OH, can be successfully transferred to students through a single course: the competency-based Veterinary Credentialed Responder (VCR) program at North Carolina State University College of Veterinary Medicine (NCSU CVM). The purpose of the VCR program was to provide cross-disciplinary training necessary for veterinary students to plan for, and respond to, disasters holistically by achieving entry-level federal credentials in emergency response.

## **Methods**

Using the qualitative software package NVIVO-9, thematic content analysis was used to interpret the informal student comments and end of program formal evaluation from the course using theory-driven themes based upon the tenets of change theory. The VCR program was also evaluated using a comparative thematic analysis of the VCR program and four case histories of change, a pre- and post-knowledge test for three program modules, and student self-evaluations of their skills, confidence levels and perspectives in the defined set of core competencies.

## **Results**

Since 2007, 313 individuals have completed the VCR program. The majority of the respondents agreed that the VCR program made them feel knowledgeable, comfortable and competent in performing duties of OH emergency preparedness and disaster response. Based upon the themes identified in the coding analysis, the VCR program is primarily an example of both teleological (planned) and cultural organizational change which shaped both the development and implementation strategy for the program.

## **Conclusions**

The VCR program has altered the paradigm in disaster preparedness and veterinary public health education by successfully training veterinarians in disaster preparedness. It is offered as a model that can be used by colleges and schools desiring to incorporate OH disaster training into their DVM professional programs.

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