What is Conservation Medicine?

Conservation medicine is an umbrella discipline that brings together practitioners, teachers, researchers, and students from various fields within the health and natural sciences. By incorporating multiple disciplines, conservation medicine challenges practitioners and students to think about new, collaborative ways to address health concerns. This will lead to new knowledge, skills, and tools for use in the natural sciences and medical fields.

The guiding principle of conservation medicine is that health—the health of individuals, groups of individuals, populations, communities, and ecosystems—connects all plant and animal species of the planet, as all species are linked together in the web of life. Conservation medicine examines human and animal health issues from various standpoints, including the emergence and resurgence of infectious disease agents, tracing the environmental sources of pathogens and pollutants, tracking the increasing impacts of toxic chemicals and hazardous substances, and the health implications of habitat fragmentation and degradation and loss of biodiversity.

Conservation medicine allows for the examination of connections between animal, human, and environmental health. It will help us to develop an understanding of the ecological causes of changes in human and animal health and increase our understanding of the consequences of diseases to populations and ecological communities. This inclusive approach has already led to the discovery of connections between the health of the planet and the health of numerous species.