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Insects and Public Health: An Overview

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Abstract

Insects are, by far, the most common animals on our planet. The ubiquity and plethora of ecological niches occupied by insects, along with the strict and sometimes forced coexistence between insects and humans, make insects a target of public health interest. This article reports the negative aspects historically linked to insects as pests and vectors of diseases, and describes their potential as bioindicators of environmental pollution, and their use as food and feed. Both negative and positive impacts of insects on human and animal health need to be addressed by public health professionals who should aim to strike a balance within the wide range of sometimes conflicting goals in insect management, such as regulating their production, exploiting their potential, protecting their health and limiting their negative impact on animals and humans. This requires increased insect knowledge and strategies to preserve human health and welfare. The aim of this paper is to provide an overview of traditional and emerging topics bridging insects and public health to highlight the need for professionals, to address these topics during their work. The present and future role and activities of public health authorities regarding insects are analyzed.

Keywords: public health, insect pests, disease vectors, bioindicators, environmental pollution, edible insects

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