

A woman in a striped sleeveless top and dark pants stands in a classroom, presenting to a group of people seated at a table. She is smiling and looking towards the audience. The room has a corrugated metal roof and large windows showing greenery outside. A whiteboard with text is visible behind her.

Rediscovering of local health traditions to recover people's health


Dr. Susana M. Balingit

Chair, Center for Complementary and Integrative Medicine- Health
Science Institute- De la Salle University.

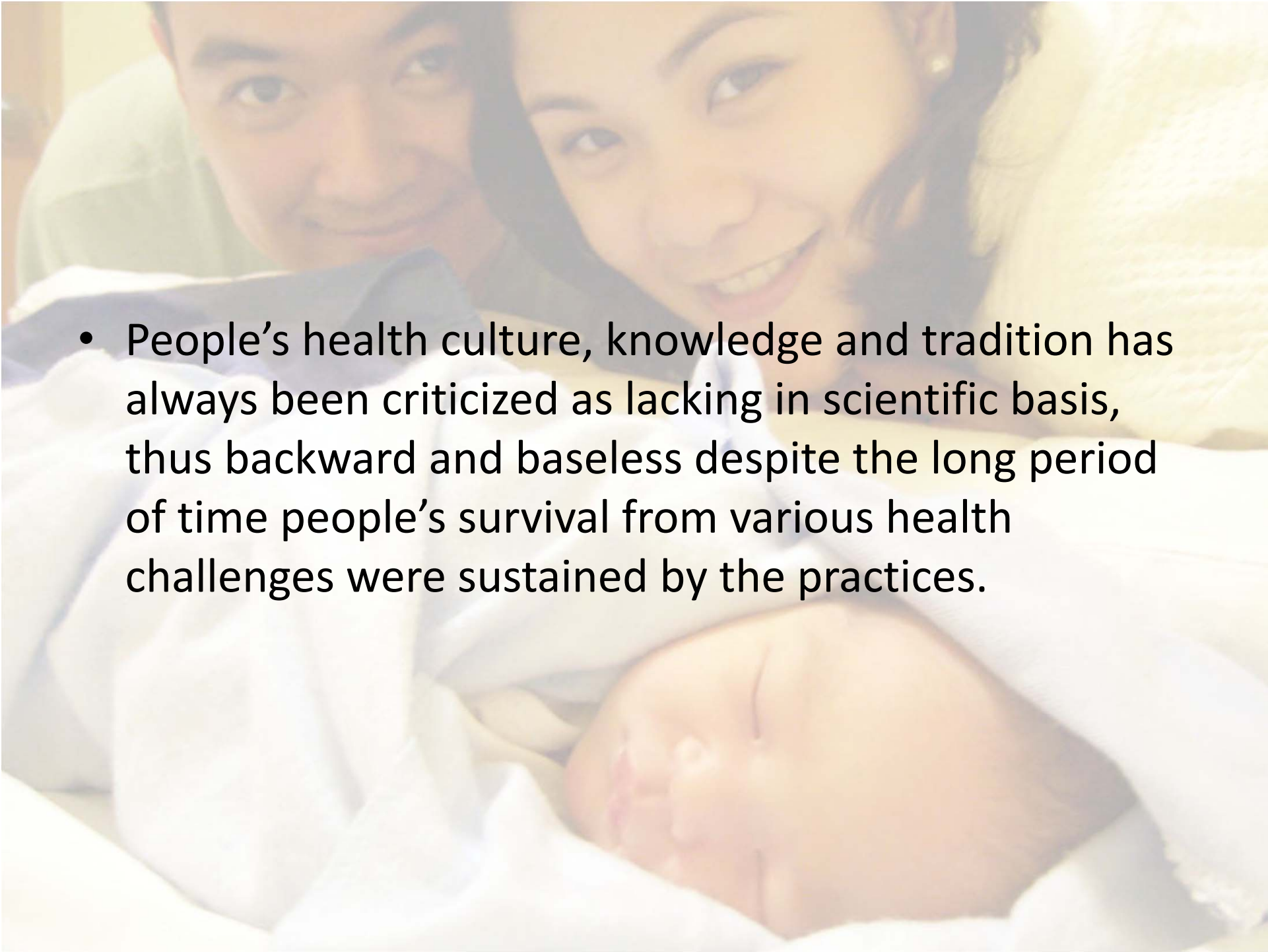
doksusan@yahoo.com

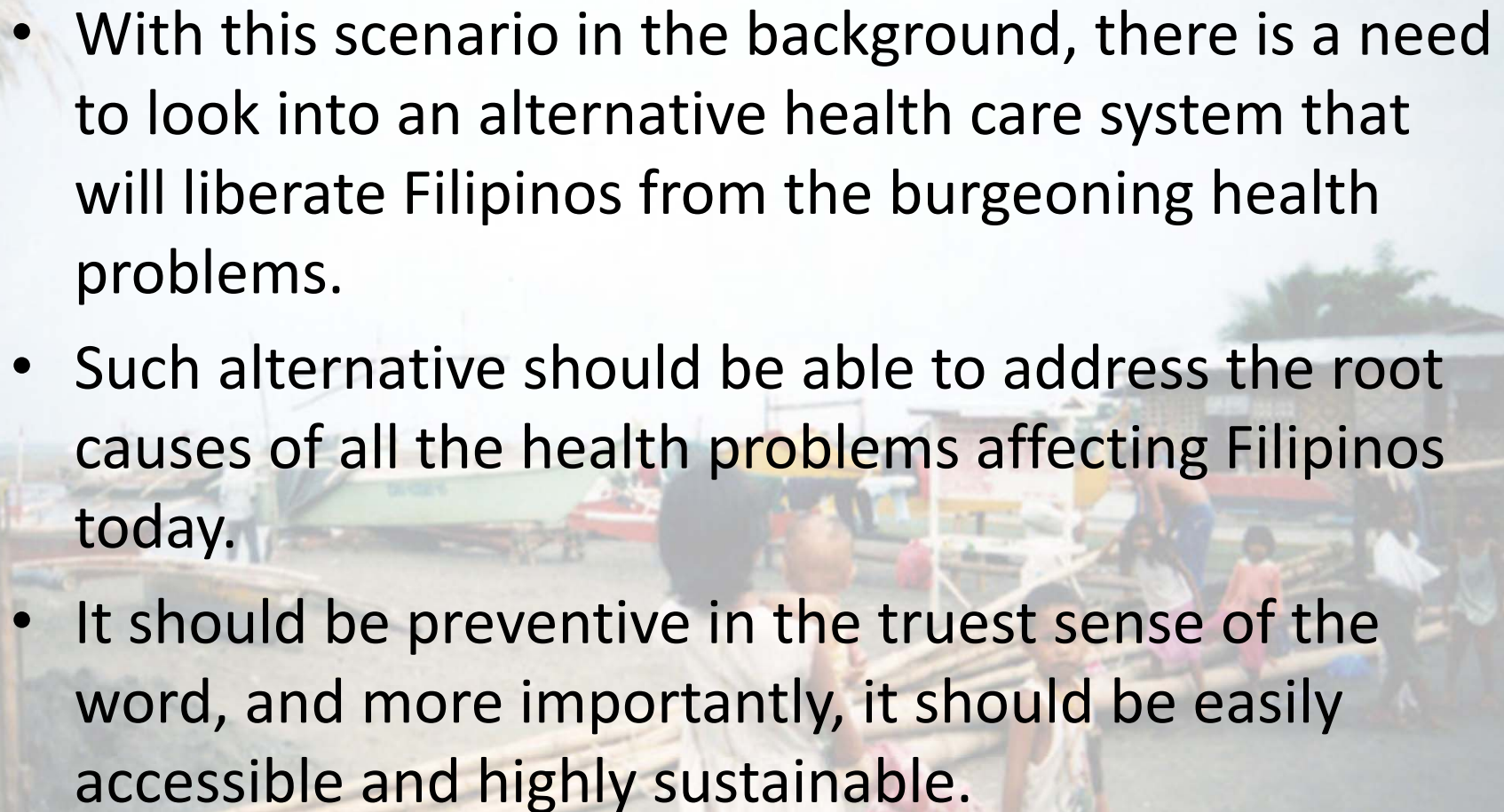
Statement of Concerns

- At the close of the last century, incidences of infectious and non-infectious diseases have soared to highest levels.
- This has become an economic burden to the country as prevailing intervention models require vast amounts of financial resources to avail of the services of various health professional, acquire medicines and access medical facilities

- 
- The mechanical worldview fail to come up with a holistic assessment of the current health situation;
 - Health situation and its solution exclude people's knowledge, tradition and culture in addressing a multidimensional concern;
 - Commoditisation of knowledge in the form of patent and intellectual property rights disregard people's culture and tradition in health knowledge formation; and
 - Existing system provides protection for big and powerful groups while failing to protect the interest of small diverse group of people.

-

- 
- People's health culture, knowledge and tradition has always been criticized as lacking in scientific basis, thus backward and baseless despite the long period of time people's survival from various health challenges were sustained by the practices.

- 
- With this scenario in the background, there is a need to look into an alternative health care system that will liberate Filipinos from the burgeoning health problems.
 - Such alternative should be able to address the root causes of all the health problems affecting Filipinos today.
 - It should be preventive in the truest sense of the word, and more importantly, it should be easily accessible and highly sustainable.

A woman with short dark hair, wearing a red top and a patterned shawl, is sitting on a wooden bench. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. In front of her is a large, striped mat with red, white, and blue patterns. To her right, there is a woven basket. The background shows a wooden lattice wall and some green plants. The overall scene is indoors, possibly in a traditional setting.

***What we grow...
.....is what we eat***

- One of the least explored alternatives is the use of indigenous food resources and traditional diets in health care



Human food: Good for the body and society

Do we consume food that are good for the environment and economy?

Do we consume foods that seem nutritionally correct but ...

- waste natural resources;
- feed fewer people;
- are costly to produce, manufacture and transport; and
- Are toxically produced?

Achieving health and happiness

- Eat more foods that provide chemical free complex carbohydrates, quality protein and fat
- chemical free whole grains as main food, with organic vegetables and other organic supplemental food

What is, and is not, healthy eating

- **Traditional Pinoy diet → healthy, includes food that nutritionists and health experts around the world agree about:**
 - **whole grains from traditional seeds**
 - **organic vegetables**
 - **organic beans and legumes**
- **Food produced in harmony with nature**
- **Locally grown and in season**
- **Less foods that are hazardous to health**
 - **high fat, high sugar, heavy on chemicals**

Food and Diseases

A photograph of a fast-food meal on a tray. In the foreground, a white plate contains several pieces of fried chicken, a mound of white rice, and a few pieces of french fries. To the left, a large white bucket is filled with more fried chicken. In the background, there are three soft drinks in cups: two are blue with 'PEPSI' visible, and one is white with a red design. The entire scene is set on a metal tray.

- Modern nutrition and medicine now cite food as key factor in health and sickness
- Evidence links high fat, chemical laden, highly processed foods to cancer, heart diseases, other chronic ailments
- Be conscious of what, and how, we eat
- Return to a more traditional diet.

Current meat industry

- Beset by ecological, environmental and health factors
- Heavy use of fatteners, sex and growth hormones
- High meat diet → higher risk of:
 - heart disease
 - colon and prostate cancer
 - other degenerative diseases

Our goal

- Get all nutrients we need from our daily food
- Eat well-balanced diet with plenty of variety, reduce need to supplement artificially
- Grow food without chemicals



Chemical free growing food and traditional diets

- What people around the world have been eating for thousands of years:
 - organically grown whole grains
 - organically grown vegetables
 - sea vegetables
- Change or modify diet according to climate
 - adapt food you eat to place you live and work
- Complex carbohydrates as main food
 - unpolished rice
 - high fiber grain products, corn

Traditional diets....

- Secondary foods: vegetables and other plants
- Third category: vegetable protein sources
→ beans, legumes
- Supplementary foods: sea vegetables, seaweeds
- Less intake of animal foods , no milk and no sugar
- **Meat increases risk of heart diseases**
- Foods high in chemical saturated fat and cholesterol
→ higher risk of cancer, stroke ,heart attack and complication of diabetes.

Reversing illness

- **Putting people on traditional organic diet will decrease blood cholesterol, even reverse severe cases of arteriosclerosis**
- **Heart disease can be reversed without surgery or drugs, but with change in diet and lifestyle**
 - **Many opinions to efficacy of suggested diet**
 - **Many opinions on approaches for certain illnesses**
 - **No unified consensus yet**

Then and now

- **Some believe there is not enough scientific evidence that diet can help us recover from illness**
- **But others have proceeded with some success**
- **Nutrition as an area of medicine, previously neglected, now gets the attention it deserves**

1950s – Mostly free range animals, free from steroids, hormones, antibiotics

Now – Fastfood outlets and restaurants serve mainly meat dishes, with small portions of salad or french fries

Meat = vitality, a huge myth

- **Some of the top marathon and triathlon champions do not even eat meat**
- **Complex carbohydrates = strength, stamina, energy**
- **Going up the food chain, from plant to animal foods → higher amount of cancer-causing pesticides**
- **Daily meat, eggs, dairy food → plenty of saturated fat, cholesterol, pesticides, other toxic residues**
- **Far less toxic chemicals in grains and vegetables**
- **Don't bind with plant tissues like they do with sticky fat in meat**

Dilemma of modern healthcare

A hand holding a test tube over a rack of test tubes, symbolizing healthcare or research. The background is a light blue gradient with a faint image of laboratory glassware.

- **Focusing on sickness, not health**
- **Doctors who really care want people to take more responsibility for their health:**
 - **eating the right foods**
 - **exercising**
 - **adopting a healthy lifestyle**
- **Chronic diseases: not an accident, but related to lifestyle, behavior and what we eat**
- **We have the power to prevent them, or solve them when they happen**

Heart disease

- **If we consume lots of sugar, cholesterol and saturated fat then cholesterol and blood fat level will go up**
- **Deposit of fats in arteries and blood vessels will continue**
- **Eating a plant-based quality diet with lots of whole grains and vegetables will prevent such problems**



Changing Filipino diet

- **Heavy dairy consumption → colic in infants, breast cancer in adults, allergies;**
- **Infants best nourished by mother's milk, not cow's milk;**
- **With natural pattern of breastfeeding established, no sense to use cow's milk when baby is weaned;**
- **Traditionally, after breastfeeding, whole cereals and vegetable foods are introduced.**

Milk for osteoporosis?

- **Indigenous Filipino tribes hike up and down mountain trails, carrying heavy loads**
- **No milk, cheese or dairy in their traditional diet**
- **Indigenous communities in coastal areas get calcium from seaweed/ sea vegetables**
- **Infants of indigenous people walk at**



**Impact of healthy eating
on family and society**

- **Modern eating habits vs family solidarity and health**
- **Higher medical costs – result of decline in personal health caused by what people are eating**
- **If chronic illnesses continue at present rate, medical costs will be a burden to local economy**



Changing eating habits and destruction of environment

- **Depletion of forests**
- **Growing use of toxic chemicals from fertilizers, pesticides**
- **Disruption of ecological balance**
- **Widespread use of non-biodegradable food containers that deplete ozone layer**



Eating in harmony with nature and producing food in harmony with nature

- **Results in less need for air conditioning and less craving for iced drinks → body retains heat when eating too much animal fat**
- **Allows you to contribute to environment protection**
- **Helps you cope better with environmental stress**
- **Meat, chicken, dairy, eggs and most animal fats need refrigeration to prevent**

Consequences of changing farming method and dietary patterns on health

- **Overall consumption of traditional balanced staples (whole grains, indigenous vegetables, etc.) has declined**
- **Meat, sugar, chicken, eggs, dairy and processed foods have become mainstays in modern diet that is supported by chemical farming method**
- **Disastrous effect on human health**
- **Underlying cause of rise of degenerative diseases in 20th century and beyond**




Public health policy for developing countries

- **Primordial prevention: Preserve appropriate traditional food production and consumption patterns**
- **Primary prevention: Encourage people to change to chemical free farming and change of their diets before disease occurs**
- **Adopt strategic measures that protect public health and environment**
- **Implement appropriate agricultural food policies**
- **Combine benefits of traditional agriculture and diets with benefits of modern science and technology**



Conclusion

- **Whether we approach decline in health from traditional/alternative perspective, or through modern epidemiological studies, the conclusion remains the same**
- **To secure health, both individually and as a society, there is an urgent need to return to a more naturally balanced way of producing and eating in harmony with nature, and in line with local agricultural and dietary traditions**

A group of people are seated around a dining table, enjoying a meal. The table is set with various dishes, including a large plate of food, a bowl of soup, and a cake decorated with raspberries. The atmosphere is warm and communal. The text is overlaid on the image in a bold, black font.

**May we all learn to eat,
work and live in harmony
with nature.**

Thank you!