

REORIENTING HEALTH SYSTEM ON AGEING CONTEXT AMID COVID19

Minerva O. Vinluan, MD, MSc CHHM, FPCGM

Medical Specialist IV

Department of the Health, Philippines



BACKGROUND

- COVID-19 pandemic a global public health challenge both in low and middle-income countries
- Older persons and countries with weaker health systems are most affected
- >32.7 million confirmed cases globally
- 304,226 in the Philippines with 5,344 deaths as of 27 September 2020
- More deaths were among OPs, and about 63.9% (Philippines)



- **COVID quarantine increased the risk of OP for mental health problems**
 - Sleep problems, anxiety, depression, cognitive decline, social isolation, neglect and abuse
 - Fear, stress, and loneliness affect OPs resilience and further jeopardize their well-being.
- **Lockdown and Community quarantine**
 - Inability to access usual care for treatment of pre-existing medical conditions
 - Disruptions in medication management compel older persons to rely on less healthy options or completely neglect these medical needs
- **Allocation of health services to focus on COVID-19 cases has left other necessary services with insufficient funds and manpower**



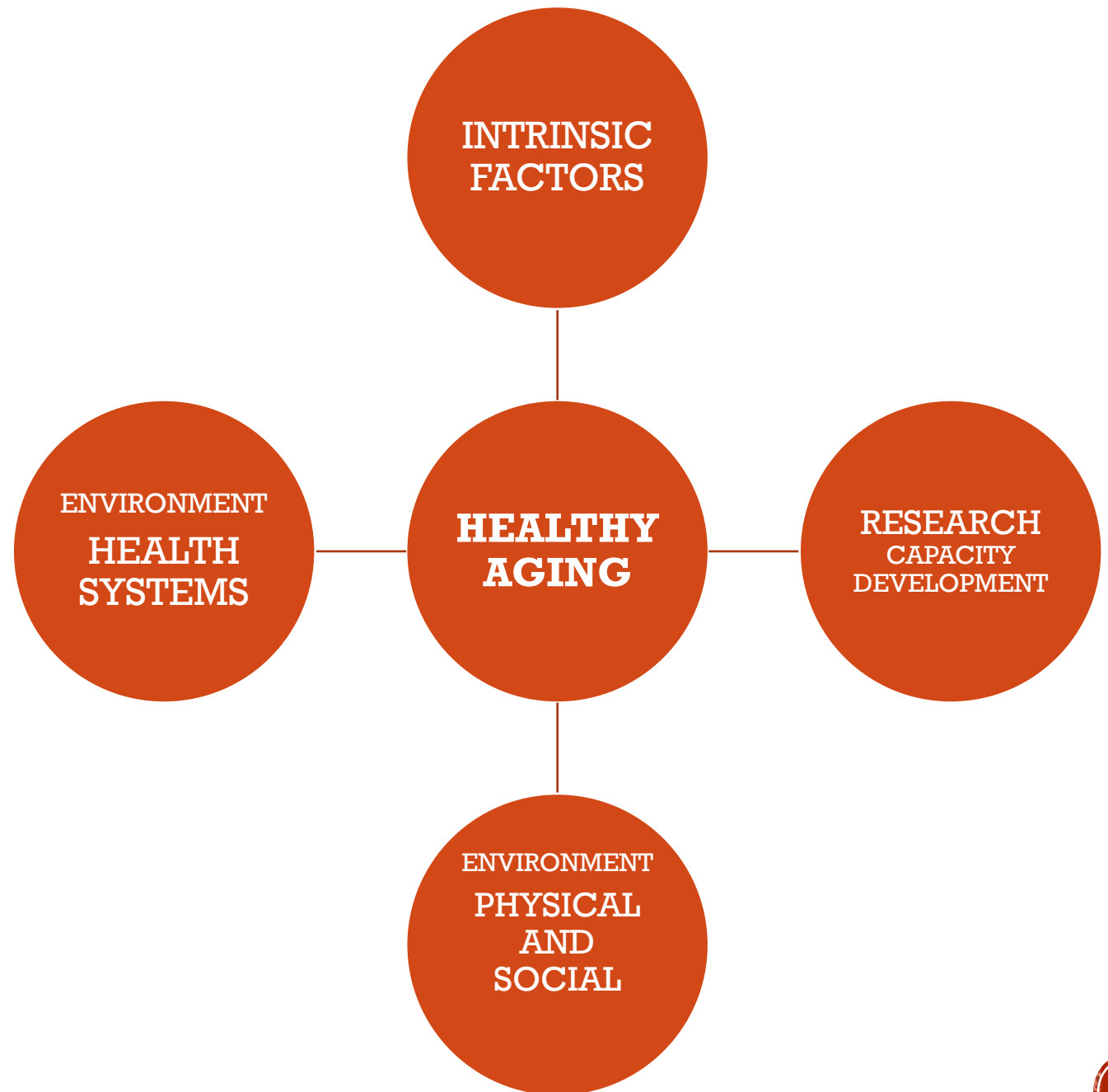
PROBLEM:

- The Philippines has an increasing aging population.
- Older persons are prone to complications and adverse outcomes during Pandemics and Disasters
- Current COVID Pandemic has highlighted the vulnerabilities of the Health System in its readiness for providing equitable and quality services for older persons.



FITFORFRAIL PROJECT FRAMEWORK

**MIXED METHODS
PARTICIPATORY**



PANDEMIC RESPONSIVENESS AND GERIATRIC PROGRAMS IN REGIONAL FACILITIES

Republic Act and Resolutions

- Expanded Senior Citizens Act
- Bayanihan to Heal as One Act
- Interagency Task Force (IATF) on Emerging
- Infectious Diseases Resolutions and Guidelines
- Policy Briefs
 - United Nations: The Impact of COVID-19 on Older Persons
 - UP Pandemic Response Team: Addressing the Immediate Needs of All, Especially the Most Vulnerable Sectors: Analysis and Recommendations
 - Ateneo de Manila University: COVID-19 and Greater Manila's health system: The Next Frontline?
- Plans and Guidelines
 - Health Facility Development Plan
 - DOH Guideline on Geriatric Ward Planning and Design
 - National Health and Wellness Program for Senior Citizens



HUMAN RESOURCE DEDICATED TO OLDER PERSONS

- **160 Geriatricians in the Philippines and 100 DOH Certified Geriatric Nurses**
- **FITforFRAIL Services Listing:**
 - **Not enough OP dedicated and trained nurses and doctors** in regional hospitals and none in primary healthcare facilities.
 - **No psychologists, psychometricians, occupational therapists, and pharmacists** dedicated to geriatric patients in most hospitals and none in all primary healthcare facilities.
 - **Nutritionist and dietician** – 2.5% OP dedicated; 2.5% with training
 - **Social Workers** – 2.74% OP dedicated; 0.21% with training



A STEP FORWARD

1. Promote and enhance HEALTHY AGING programs

a. National Program for Senior Citizens (Comprehensive Geriatric Assessment, fitness, nutrition, vaccination)

- Enhance services for mental health and frailty
- Align the delivery of the services of healthcare facilities with Universal Healthcare
- Expedite the establishment of the identified Geriatric Centers and Specialty Center in line with the Philippine law
- Ensure the availability, adequacy, and quality of geriatric services and programs that improve health outcomes of older persons



- Support Communities and families in their care for the frail and isolated OPs
- Conduct Aging research, monitoring, and evaluation for improvement of services and policies
 - Analyze and disaggregate COVID data based on
 - AGE GROUPS (60-69;70-79-80+), and
 - SEX
 - Develop COVID Adaptations to Community Research



THE ESTABLISHMENT OF QUALITY GERIATRIC PROGRAMS AND SERVICES WILL ENABLE THE HEALTH SYSTEM TO COMMIT TO HEALTHY AGING AND RESPOND BETTER TO CHALLENGES OF OLDER PERSONS NOW, DURING DISASTERS, AND THIS PANDEMIC.

THANK YOU.

