



Health and Traditional Medicines in Tribes and Government Initiatives

DR. NUPUR TIWARI
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
Indian Institute of Public Administration,
IIPA Delhi

INTRODUCTION

- Most of the tribals live in a hilly or forested area where physical environments, malnutrition, inadequate access to potable water, lack of personal hygiene and sanitation make them more vulnerable to diseases and as result of they have worse health indicators than the general population.

Tribal Health in India

- Though tribal people represent the heterogeneous groups yet they have one commonality in terms of poor health indicators, a greater burden of morbidity and mortality and very limited or no access to health care services (Report of the expert committee on Tribal Health, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, n.d.).

- Tribal health has a very different yet comprehensible relationship with nature and its power.
- They are very much akin and belief to supernatural powers in curing or treating any sort of health-related issues
- Women because of their close tie and relationship with the forest, they are the most susceptible to the various health vulnerability and exploitation.

- The incidence of health-related issues is found more among the tribal women and children because of their biophysical attributes and the state of vulnerability which further makes them more vulnerable group among the tribal people.
- The state of malnutrition is also a grey side of the tribal health.

- There are belief and practices about the health care in the tribal community that makes them real custodian of the medicinal plants. The knowledge of medicinal plants is transferred from one generation to other generation through an oral culture.

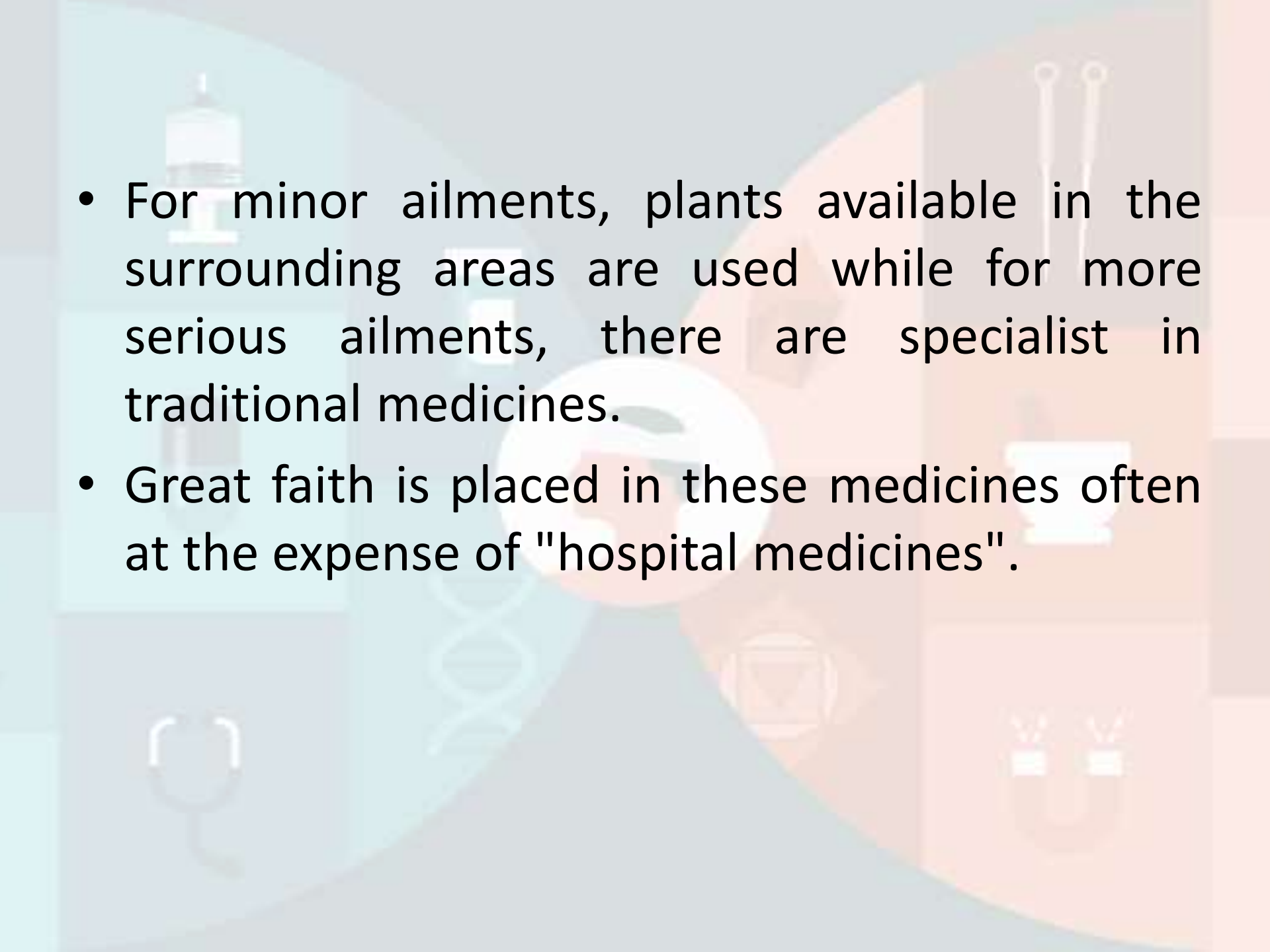
- Although in tribal areas the government has provided for the establishment of primary health centers for every 20,000 population and sub-centers for every 3000 population, health care is not available to the majority of the tribals.

- Health problems prevalent in tribal areas include endemic infectious diseases like malaria, tuberculosis, and diarrhoeal diseases, apart from malnutrition and anaemia .

Tribal Medicine

- There are estimated to be around 25,000 effective plant based formulations used in folk medicine and known to rural communities all over India (Planning Commission, 2000).
- The tribes who live in isolation, practice their own system of medicine known as ethno medicine or tribal medicine.

- Different tribal communities utilize different plants or different parts of the same plants for particular ailments.
- This indicates a deep knowledge about these herbs and plant as well as combination and dose of such indigenous objects for cure of different diseases.
- Various herbal medicines utilized by many tribes have rich ingredients of medicinal value for effective birth control, treatment of skin diseases, ear and eye infection, cough and cold and other epidermal diseases.

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- For minor ailments, plants available in the surrounding areas are used while for more serious ailments, there are specialist in traditional medicines.
 - Great faith is placed in these medicines often at the expense of "hospital medicines".

- Tribal medicinal knowledge is passed from generation to generation by means of word of mouth.
- According to Mashelkar (2002), folk traditions are handed over orally from generation to generation.
- The folk medicine is based on traditional beliefs, norms and practices based on centuries old experiences of trials and errors, success and failures at the household level.

Importance of forest medicinal plants

- Medicinal plants growing in forest ecosystem meet many of the health care needs and requirements of the Indian population.
- For example, of the 2000 drug items recorded in the Indian Materia Medica, 1800 are of plant origin - about 80% of the raw materials required in the manufacture of drugs are forest based (Lambert et al 1997).

- A survey conducted by the All India co-ordinated Research project on Ethnobiology (AICRPE) recorded over 8000 species of wild plants used by the tribals and other traditional communities in India for treating various health problems.
- The maximum numbers of medicinal plants are utilized by the folk traditions, followed by Ayurveda, Sidha, Unani, Homeopathy, Tibetan and Modern respectively.

The following are the steps to be taken for improvement of tribal health and also for implementation of comprehensive tribal health policy:

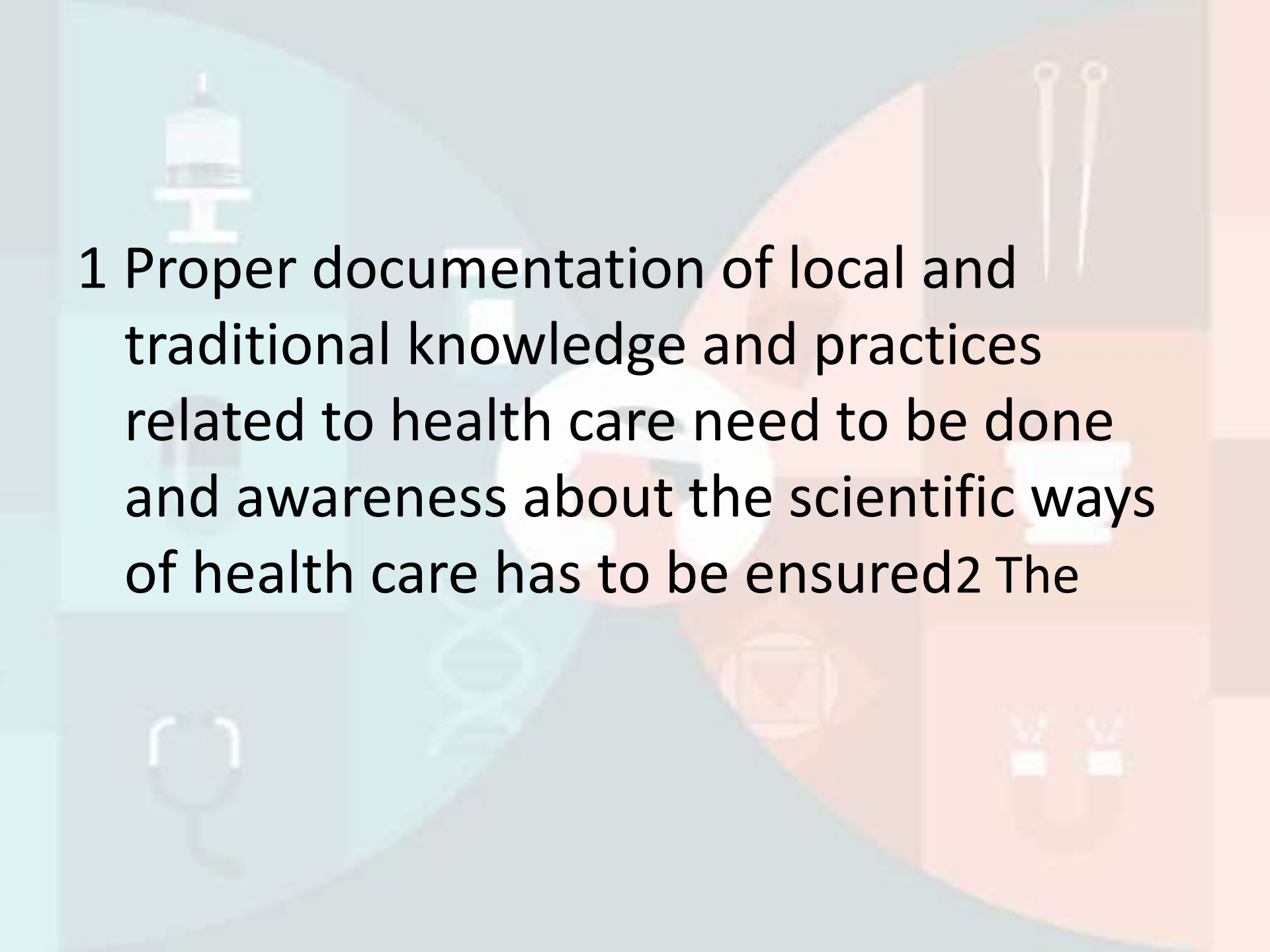
Promotion of awareness about health issues

Changing the behavior of health care providers

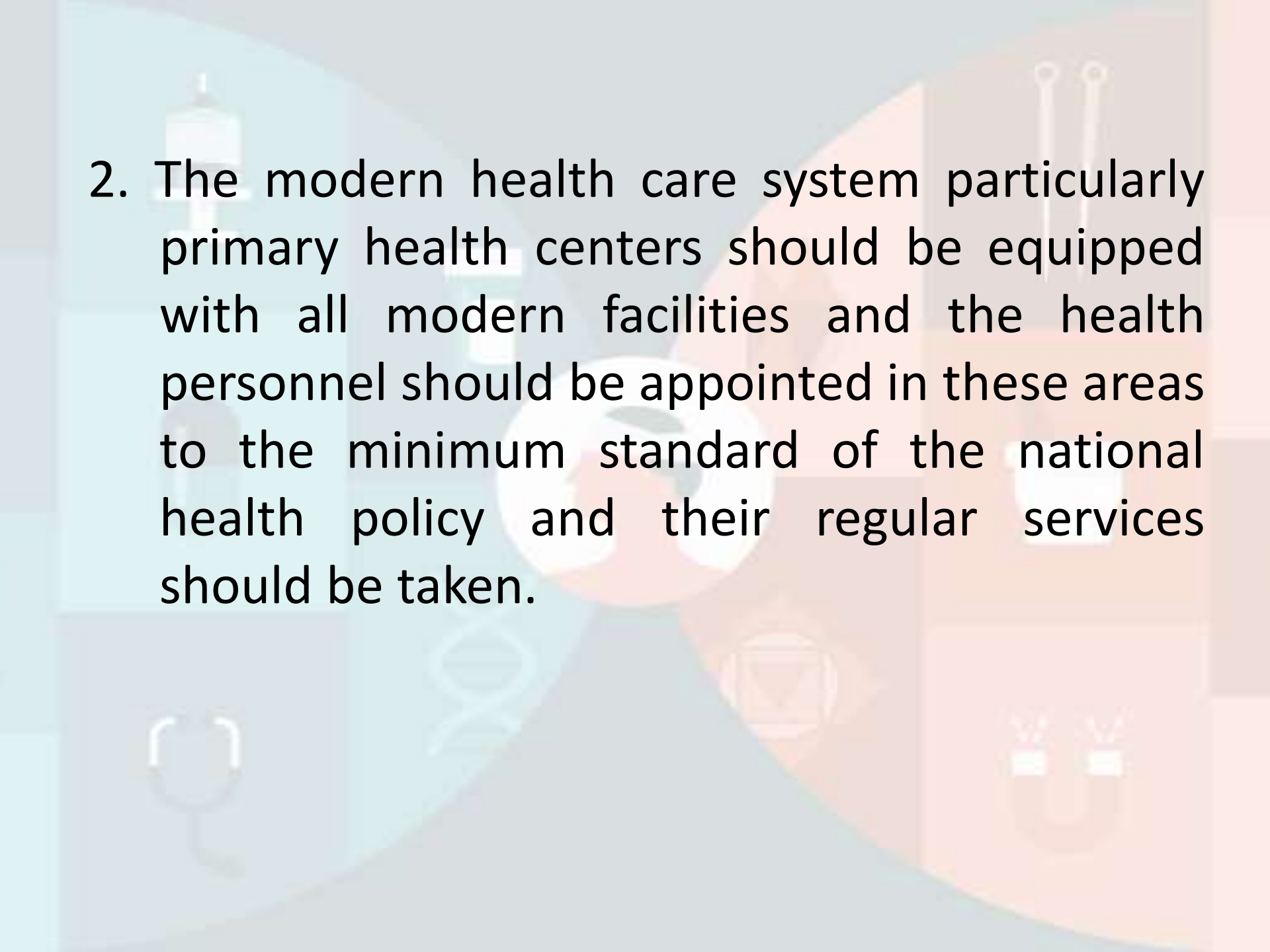
Strengthening of the existing human resources

Bringing health services to remote populations

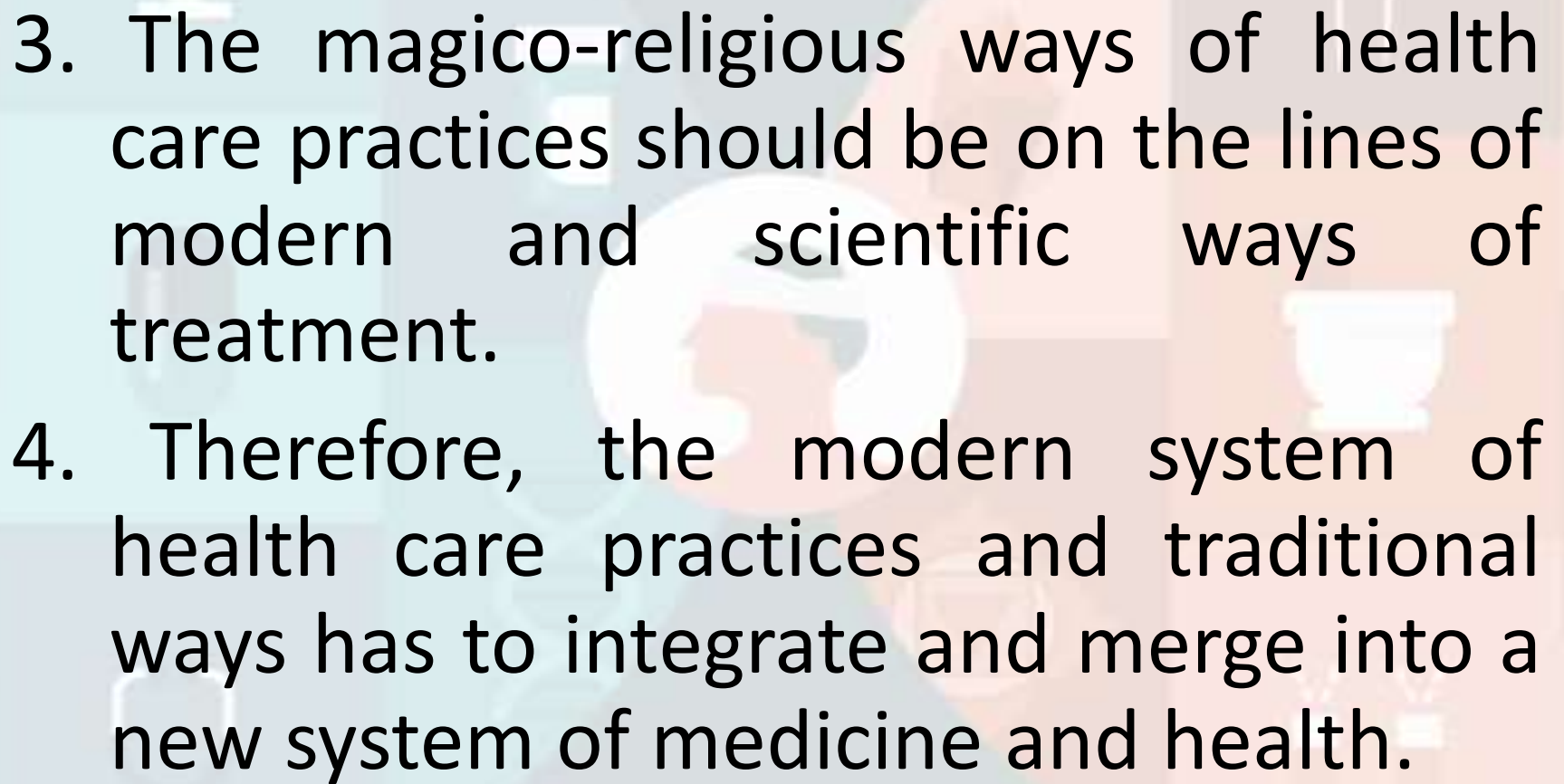
Administrative reforms approach

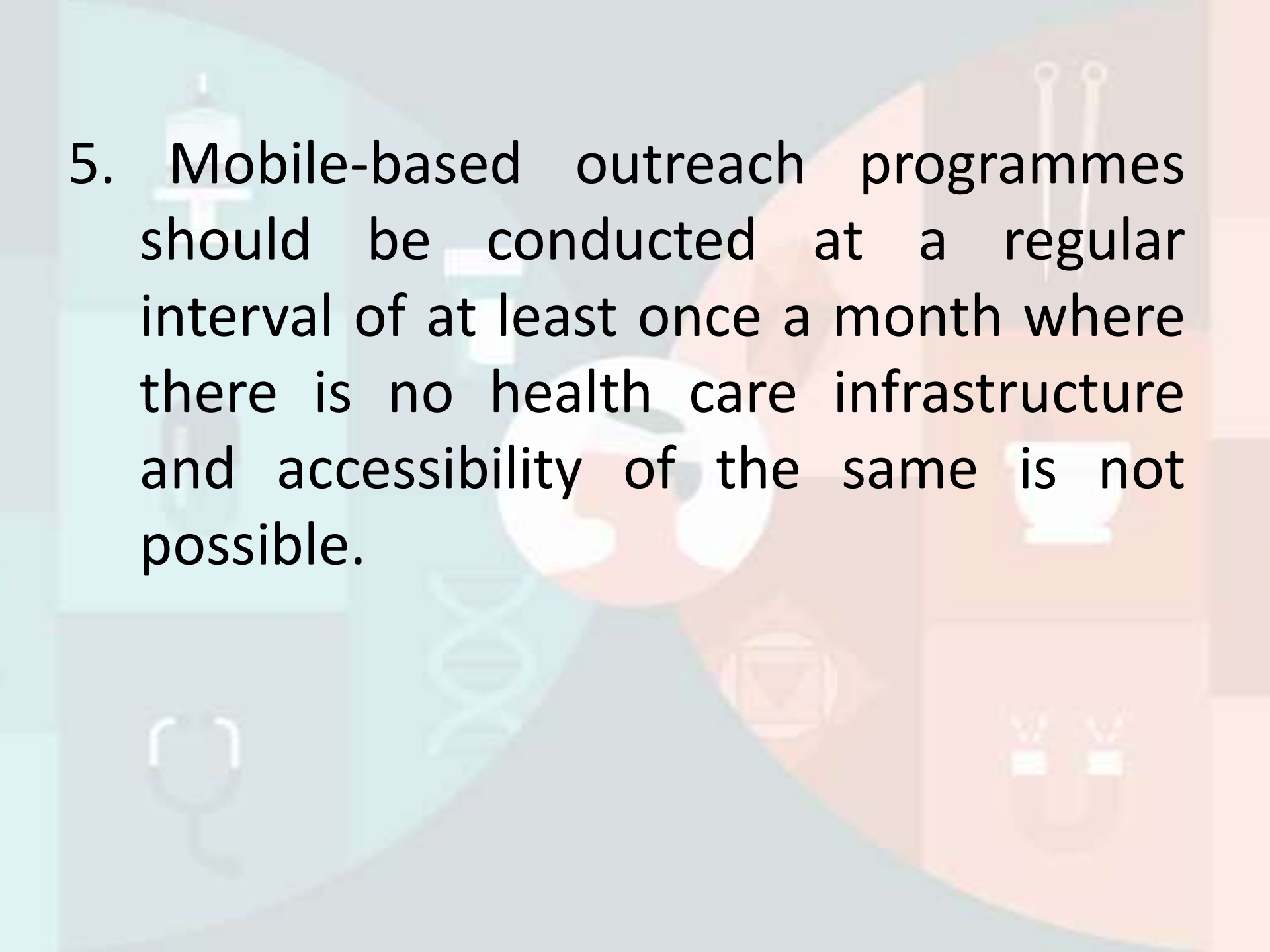


1 Proper documentation of local and traditional knowledge and practices related to health care need to be done and awareness about the scientific ways of health care has to be ensured2 The

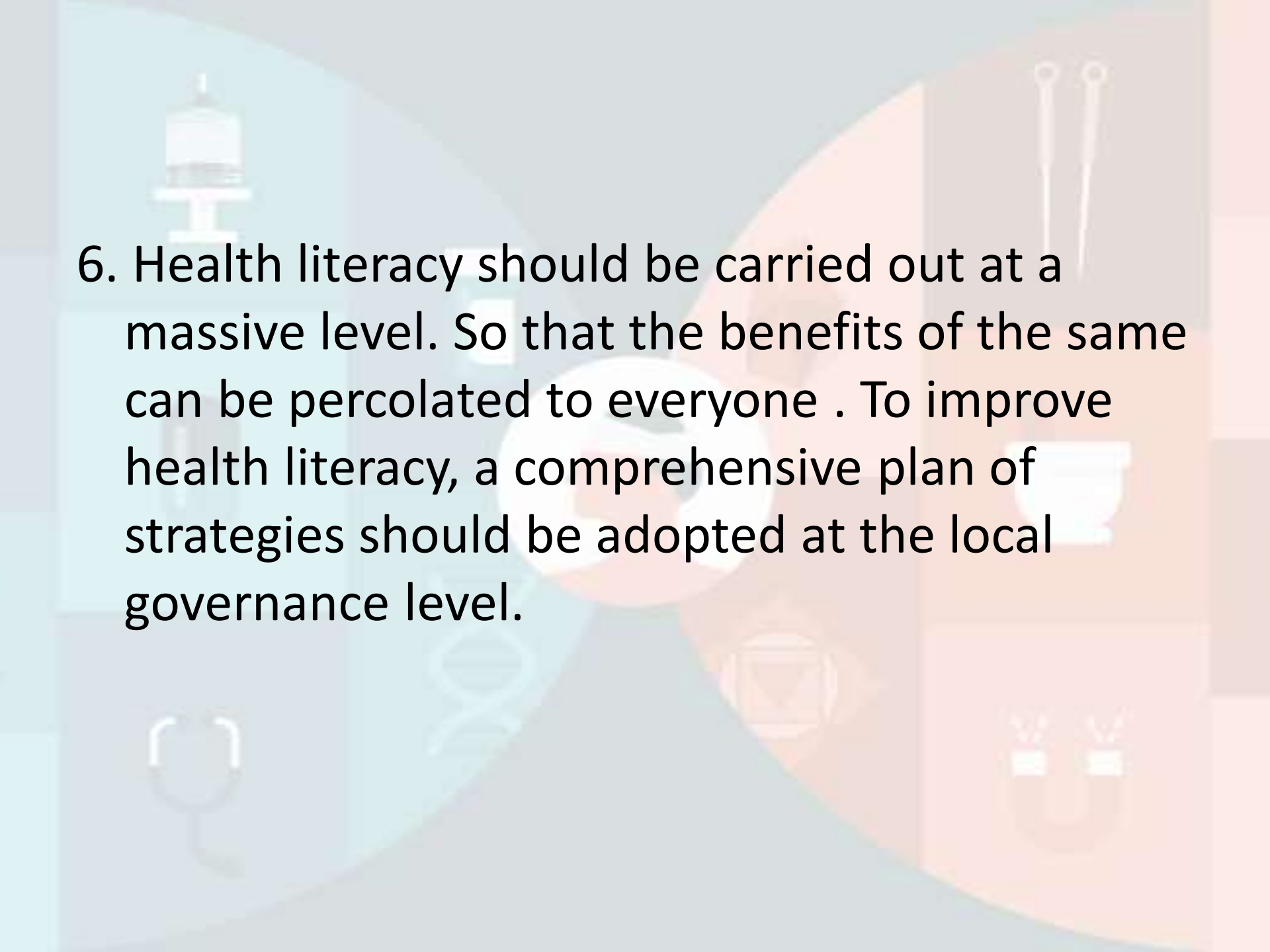
The background features a central globe with a red and white color scheme. Surrounding the globe are various medical icons: a syringe, a stethoscope, a DNA double helix, a microscope, and a pair of forceps. The overall aesthetic is clean and professional, with a light blue and white color palette.

2. The modern health care system particularly primary health centers should be equipped with all modern facilities and the health personnel should be appointed in these areas to the minimum standard of the national health policy and their regular services should be taken.


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- The background of the slide features a soft-focus image of a laboratory or medical setting. In the center, a white globe is visible, showing the continents. To the left, there is a piece of laboratory equipment, possibly a pipette or a small scale, on a stand. To the right, another piece of equipment, possibly a pipette or a small container, is visible. The overall color palette is light and airy, with pastel shades of blue, green, and pink.
3. The magico-religious ways of health care practices should be on the lines of modern and scientific ways of treatment.
 4. Therefore, the modern system of health care practices and traditional ways has to integrate and merge into a new system of medicine and health.

The background features a central globe with a hand holding it. Surrounding the globe are various medical and health-related icons: a stethoscope, a DNA double helix, a microscope, a pill bottle, a syringe, a pair of tweezers, a pair of forceps, and a pair of scissors. The background is divided into light blue and light orange sections.

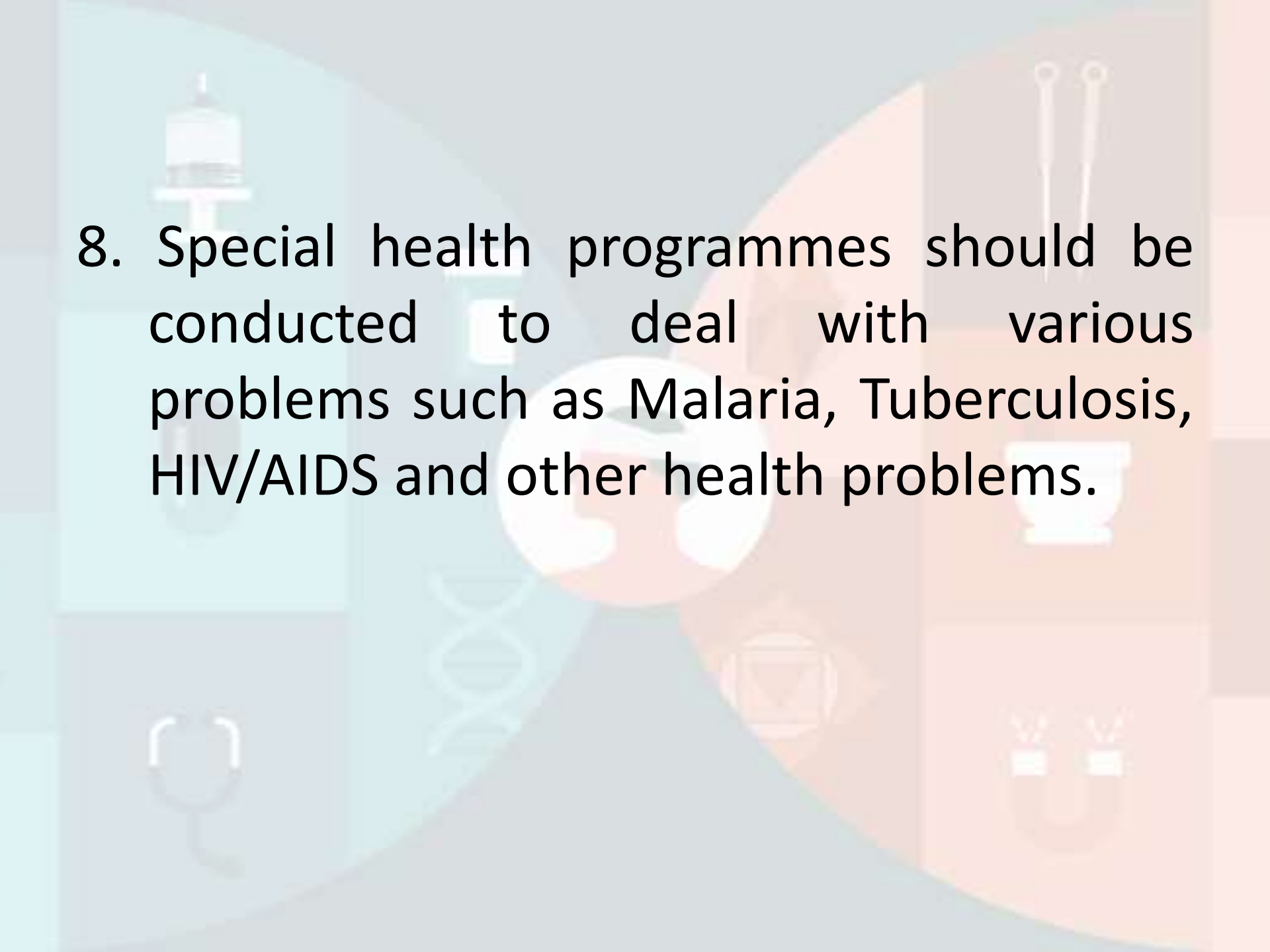
5. Mobile-based outreach programmes should be conducted at a regular interval of at least once a month where there is no health care infrastructure and accessibility of the same is not possible.

The background features a large, semi-transparent number '6' in the center. To the left of the '6' is a light blue circular area containing faint icons of a laboratory flask on a stand, a DNA double helix, and a stethoscope. To the right of the '6' is a light orange circular area containing faint icons of a pair of tweezers, a white pill, and a pair of glasses. The overall background is a light, neutral color with these circular accents.

6. Health literacy should be carried out at a massive level. So that the benefits of the same can be percolated to everyone . To improve health literacy, a comprehensive plan of strategies should be adopted at the local governance level.

The background features a light blue and white color scheme with various medical icons. On the left, there is a stethoscope and a pill bottle. In the center, a DNA double helix is visible. On the right, there are two test tubes and a pair of tweezers. The overall theme is healthcare and medicine.

7. Since the incidence of communicable and non-communicable diseases are on the rise among the tribal population. Therefore, more mobile health camp should be organized and it should be integrated into the policy level.

The background features a light blue and orange color scheme. On the left, there is a faint icon of a laboratory flask on a stand. In the center, a white globe is visible. To the right, there are faint icons of a pair of tweezers and a pair of forceps. At the bottom, there are faint icons of a DNA double helix and a pair of forceps. The text is centered and reads:

8. Special health programmes should be conducted to deal with various problems such as Malaria, Tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and other health problems.

THANK YOU

