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## **NATIONAL OBJECTIVES FOR HEALTH: DISEASE PREVENTION AND CONTROL**

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It has been noted that the gains against diseases were the results not of treatment or cure alone, but in most cases, by measures that prevent and control their onset and spread into problematic proportions. The remarkable victory worldwide against infectious diseases (smallpox, polio, measles among others) was won by making available vaccines that prevent them. Other common diseases were controlled by improved sanitation and personal hygiene, better nutrition and lifestyle.

Knowledge about the origins and patterns of diseases provide significant insights that translate into preventive and curative measures and strategies. Over the years, medical research and technology development continue to increase the health systems' capacity for prevention and cure.

The common killer diseases of children have come close to eradication through immunization, although tuberculosis and measles remain as major public health problems in the Philippines. With the increase of life expectancy among Filipinos and the effective control of communicable diseases, the disease burden is expected to shift to non-communicable diseases. Now more than ever, the country's health delivery system is faced with the double burden of disease from both infectious and degenerative causes.

Against this background, relying entirely on the treatment of diseases is expensive and irresponsible if attempt at prevention is not given its full measure. It makes sense therefore, that the best strategy to bring down the cost of health and ensure the accessibility of quality health care is preventive health services. It is a global phenomenon that has positive documented results. On this score, the National Objectives for Health (NOH) have clearly identified the health goals and targets

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for public health actions up to year 2004 that lean heavily on prevention and control without prejudice to the application of effective medical treatment as well.

The NOH for 1999-2004 are focused on the country's major health problems, specific health issues that cut across several disease prevention and control measures and special target groups that need urgent attention. The goals of NOH are intended to be achieved within the time frame indicated using available resources and renewed efforts.

The NOH underscore preventive and promotive health services especially at the grassroots where some of the most vulnerable sectors (the poor and those in equally difficult circumstance) of the population are. The move is also calculated to tip the scale of an otherwise inequitable health expenditure towards the need of the greater number of Filipinos.