

CocoTherapy: Providing Coconut-Based Products for Pets A Special Interview With Carmina O'Connor and Charisa Antigua

By Dr. Karen Shaw Becker

Dr. Karen Becker:

Hi, I'm Dr. Karen Becker and joining me today are two coconut oil expert twins, Charisa Antigua and Carmina O'Connor, the ladies of CocoTherapy. Thank you both for joining me.

Carmina O'Connor:

Hey Karen, thanks for having us.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Yes. Now, I do have to say as a little disclaimer for everyone reading and listening to this, these lovely ladies started out as my clients in Chicago. So I've known you, I feel like going on 20 years, but a part of our evolution as clients and veterinarian and patients, I think you have a patient sitting on your lap, don't you?

Carmina O'Connor:

Yep. Right here.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Love it. That's so good. So good. So as a part of me being a part of your health care team, I've also had the pleasure and the enjoyment of watching your third generation family business flourish under your leadership. So it has been a joy for me professionally to care for your babies. But, it's also been a joy for me to see the evolution of you as female business owners and entrepreneurs, expanding your family's beautiful business. So, why don't you back up a little bit? I know how you were born into coconut oil, but maybe our listeners and readers don't. So why don't you just explain a little bit about your background in terms of how your family got into coconut farming and coconut oil?

Carmina O'Connor:

Okay. Well, our family has been growing coconuts and making coconut oil and other coconut products for over three generations. When we were kids, we used to be in our kitchen, my grandma's kitchen, and we used to watch her make coconut oil every day. And she used it for everything. She used it for ... it was her first aid kit in a jar. She used it for every ailment, not just for us, but all our pets, our animals that were on our farm. So she loved coconut oil. She believed in it. We saw how it worked. It was her medicine, it was her food and medicine. So we grew up with that knowledge and we saw how it worked.

Charisa Antigua:

Yeah, we ate coconut all the time. We had coconut desserts and coconut oil, everything.

Carmina O'Connor:

Our animals ate it. And we just saw the health benefits, basically. Not just with us, but with our pets as well. It's just something we really believed in. So it's something that was instilled in us since we were little, that it was a healthy food and functional food for us and our pets.

Dr. Karen Becker:

And don't you think a little bit of that is cultural? Because I was born and raised in the U.S. without parents and grandparents and great grandparents in the Philippines. Growing up in Iowa where I didn't even see my first real coconut at the local Hy-Vee till I was like 10. And I remember my mother saying, "These are exotic fruits and they're very expensive." And I remember thinking, and then once a year we would get a coconut and go outside on the driveway and my dad would smash it open and we would all eat it.

Dr. Karen Becker:

And we would also get macadamia nuts. One coconut and a bag of macadamia nuts were our once-a-year treats, because they were really expensive. And I just remember it being a luxury in my family to eat it, but there was never any negative connotation to it being unhealthy. You were raised in a culture where it was not just a staple of food, but it's generationally for hundreds, probably thousands of years, it's been the foundation of a culture. So when you first started hearing, "Hey, this could be bad." It almost had to be like culture shock to you.

Carmina O'Connor:

Exactly. It was culture shock to us, because we grew up where like farmers or people in the Philippines, for example, who were poor, they couldn't afford to go to a veterinarian. They couldn't afford to go to a doctor.

Charisa Antigua:

Or get antibiotics.

Carmina O'Connor:

Yeah. They didn't give their animals antibiotics, antiviral medications and antifungal medications. They gave them coconut oil. That was their antiviral, antifungal medication.

Charisa Antigua:

And it worked.

Carmina O'Connor:

It worked. And they would give it, you know how farmers here in the U.S. would give animals antibiotics in their feed? They didn't do that. They gave coconut oil in their feed [[crosstalk 00:04:17](#)]. I mean they just use it as health. Even veterinarians in the Philippines would use it for so many health benefits. So when we came here to the U.S. and it was just weird to us, you're right, it was a culture shock because we always thought everybody in the world thought it was healthy.

Charisa Antigua:

I do remember when we first had a bottle of coconut oil that we brought to a pet show, it was in New York. The people kept saying, "What is that? Is that lard?" They just couldn't get their hand around it.

And they thought we just put like suntan oil, and we go, "No, you feed it orally." And they couldn't get their head around it and you thought it was so unhealthy.

Carmina O'Connor:

But, you know it's funny, Dr. Becker, I don't know if you remember, but when we used to bring Violet to you, one of our Yorkies, who's no longer here. He had severe allergies and you, you were like a trailblazer with coconut oil because you knew about it. You knew its health benefits. You told us that allergies are part of an overactive immune system and you recommended coconut oil and we're like, [inaudible 00:05:20].

Charisa Antigua:

She knows something, like "What?"

Carmina O'Connor:

Yeah, we were really shocked.

Charisa Antigua:

She's actually saying that.

Carmina O'Connor:

At the time we didn't make our coconut oil product for pets. At that time, we just used it on our own families. But we were like, "Wow, this is the first time we heard anybody in the U.S.-"

Charisa Antigua:

- outside of our family.

Carmina O'Connor:

Outside of our family say that. So you were a trailblazer for us and knowing about coconut oil.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Well, and I have personally experienced the benefits of coconut oil and I've seen it firsthand in practice, including with of course, Violet being among my patients who have benefited from coconut oil. But it seems to me that – so I feel like there's been this wave, where initially 15 years ago people are like, "What is it?" Followed by, "Oh my gosh, is it safe?" Followed by general acceptance. And then in the last couple of years I've seen this resurgence. I'm going to call it a backlash of people saying, "I don't know if we should all be giving coconut oil to our pets."

Dr. Karen Becker:

First of all, let's back up and have a little history about coconut oil. For most of us who weren't raised being told about its benefits or even understanding the type of fat that it is. So let's just start with the basics and why don't you two explain to our readers and listeners a little bit about coconut oil as a fat and how the fat in coconut oil is very different from other types of fats.

Charisa Antigua:

Right. Well, that's a really good question, because okay, fats in general are most misunderstood by the public, so everybody knows there are saturated fats and unsaturated fats. And most doctors say, "Stick to unsaturated fats. Those are healthier for you." So unsaturated fats would be the omega-3, -6 and -9, so they're fish oil and olive oil, et cetera. And yes, they have definitely good health benefits. These unsaturated fats though are prone to oxidation, because of their chemical structure. They have double bonds. And because they're prone to oxidation, they can get rancid.

Charisa Antigua:

So this is why we say put your olive oil or fish oil in the refrigerator, in a dark bottle or whatever. Now, saturated fats-

Carmina O'Connor:

- and they can be pro-inflammatory.

Charisa Antigua:

And they can be pro-inflammatory as well when they oxidize. So saturated fats are very different because they are saturated with hydrogen atoms, they have single bonds. So these are your meats, fats, butter and coconut oil. So these are very shelf-stable. They are not prone to oxidation and you can keep them in a clear jar and you don't have to refrigerate it. In the Philippines, coconut oil is actually kept in the kitchen counter all year round and it's liquid and it will not oxidize or go rancid. So, that's a wonderful difference.

Charisa Antigua:

Now, saturated fat is further broken down into two types of fats. So not all saturated fats are the same. So their class – so we all know that the fats are made out of carbon atoms, right? So saturated fats are either classified by medium-chain fats or long-chain fats. So if they're medium-chain fatty acids like coconut oil, they are made out of 12 carbon atoms or less. Long-chain fats like meat and butter are made out of 14 carbon atoms or more. Now, it's important because whether a fat is long-chain or medium-chain fat, our bodies process them differently. So if you want to look at long-chain fats, so your dog or us, we eat steak or butter, et cetera.

Charisa Antigua:

These long chain-fatty acids work their way to the intestines where they need pancreatic enzymes to break them down, or pancreatic lipase to break them down. And then they also – then chylomicrons, which I call fat transporters, are created from the intestinal wall, they transport the fats out of the intestines and they can go out into the lymphatic system in the blood and some of them eventually make their way to the liver.

Charisa Antigua:

Now, the liver will further process it and convert it to triglycerides and cholesterol, et cetera. It's released back into the system where they go to the adipose fat tissue, skeletal muscles and our hearts. And that's why these long-chain saturated fats can be atherogenic or clog arteries. Coconut oil is very different. It's a lot more simple. So it's a medium-chain fat, so the molecules are smaller, so they don't need chylomicrons to be transported out of the intestines and they don't need pancreatic lipase as well. So what happens is these medium-chain fats go through the portal vein, go directly to the liver and they don't need bile acids to be broken down either.

Charisa Antigua:

And once in the liver they're rapidly converted to ketones and released out into the blood and used for energy. So this is why people consider coconut oil a thermogenic oil. It doesn't add to your adipose fat tissues. It doesn't clog your heart. And it's used for energy and it feeds the brain. So there's a big difference between how medium-chain fats and long-chain fats, both saturated, are used by the body.

Dr. Karen Becker:

I think that term saturated fat is what, there's a big hang-up around that pertaining to human health. People think, "Oh my goodness, my doctor told me to avoid saturated fat, or I'm obese, or I have a cardiac condition, or I have triglyceride issues or cholesterol issues." What people don't realize – twofold issues. Yes, dogs and cats are absolutely prone to obesity. And yes, they have the same lifestyle-related diseases that many North Americans have. But, dogs and cats don't have issues with heart attacks and cholesterol issues in the same sense that because dogs and cats were designed to consume saturated fat and in abundance, dogs are kind of scavenging carnivores or opportunistic omnivores, however you want to classify them. Dogs will eat anything, right? Kitties are obligate carnivores, but their diet includes a lot of saturated fat. And their bodies, I believe, are quite adapted to handle that.

Dr. Karen Becker:

So some people have said, "Aren't you afraid about heart attacks in dogs?" And I think generally speaking, dogs don't have heart attacks like humans have heart attacks. So I think even that term saturated fat people think it's bad, but once you realize it in context, animals actually need saturated fats and the saturated fat in coconut oil is so beneficial for so many other parts of the body. As you mentioned, it's one of the few fats that nourishes the brain. So are you seeing, do you use it a lot with older patients?

Dr. Karen Becker:

What are some of the indications? I think most people are aware that coconut oil is like, "I put it in my hair every day, use it on my face." I slather it everywhere. I use it in hot spots, cracked nails, cracked heels, dry noses, old dog skin where they get the elephantiasis-like skin, kitties that lick their bellies. It's like the best topical salve ever. But, feeding it. Some people think, "Ooh, I don't know about that." So, when you feed animals coconut oil, let's talk a little bit about all the places it goes and all the good things it does.

Carmina O'Connor:

Okay. You're right. A lot of people are familiar with coconut oil in a topical sense. They'll even use it to brush their dog's teeth or they'll use it to clean their ears, for ear infections. So when it comes to that, they're fine with it. Now, when it comes to consuming it, that's where they have the problem. First of all, coconut oil is really rich in the triglycerides that are very healthy, mainly caprylic, capric and lauric acid. Those are the three most of functional and beneficial medium-chain fatty acids in coconut oil. Now, caprylic acid is antifungal, so it's known to kill fungi and yeast, it can help control on systemic yeast issues in animals when they take it internally. Capric acid converts to monolaurin when it's consumed, and this is an antiviral, so it's a great antiviral medication or supplement.

Carmina O'Connor:

And then lauric acid, which is the most familiar of coconut oil, it converts to monoglyceride monolaurin. And when it's consumed that that's antibacterial. Now, these are the three main fatty acids that coconut oil has that gives it all its health benefits.

Charisa Antigua:

And I think too, it's interesting to note, people don't know this, but capric and caprylic acids also have their own chains of carbon atoms, right? So they're the smaller of the three medium-chain fatty acids. Caprylic has C8, Capric has C10, so because they're smaller, the liver can take these medium-chain fatty acids and they can convert it to ketones at a much faster rate. So if you take capric C8 and C10, in about an hour and a half, your ketone levels, blood levels are fully elevated. However, in three hours it's out of your system. Lauric acid is a slightly bigger medium-chain fatty acid, that's C12, so it will convert to ketones at a slightly slower rate, three hours, still fast, but then it stays in your system for eight hours.

Charisa Antigua:

So then you can sustain your ketone levels in your blood a lot longer with lauric acid, which is why we like lauric acid so much. But, if you look at the nutritional value of coconut oil, it isn't particularly rich in phytonutrients. I mean it does contain-

Carmina O'Connor:

- or vitamins.

Charisa Antigua:

Or vitamins and minerals. It does contain trace amounts of iron, vitamin K, vitamin E and it has phytosterols. So, you don't give coconut oil to supply unique vitamins and minerals to their dogs, that may be lacking. We give it as a therapeutic supplement to help support a dog where their diets are lacking and they can't process things. For example, coconut oil is fantastic for animals with lipid disorders or pancreatitis.

Carmina O'Connor:

Well, my cat actually has pancreatitis. He's 18 years old now, but he had chronic pancreatitis when he was 15. And whenever I gave him fish oil or any kind of fat, fatty food, he would vomit. He would just throw up. But I mean, and the only fat I could give him was coconut oil. And he's been taking that coconut oil since he was 15, he's now 18 years old, and that's the only fat he can actually tolerate. And then I also had an older Chihuahua, Lucy, you met her.

Dr. Karen Becker:

I did. Yeah.

Carmina O'Connor:

And she had a luxating patella. She had arthritis in her old age, she'd be really stiff. So coconut oil was a great anti-inflammatory. So it helps her with her joints. It helped her move around a lot easier. Then the other thing too, when she got older, I noticed she got like [crosstalk 00:16:10] cognitive dysfunction. Yeah. She'd be looking at a wall and barking at nothing and she'd be kind of out of it. So I gave her coconut oil, because I noticed that it did help her. I mean, obviously we know that it helps in cognitive health.

Charisa Antigua:

She just seemed so much more alert.

Carmina O'Connor:

Yeah, she did. She seemed more into it. And I know that there's a study about beagles with their cognitive health. I think you mentioned that before in one of your other blogs.

Dr. Karen Becker:

That's true. The research has been a little bit on dogs and canine cognitive decline, but there is a vast amount of research on the human side of things. That's probably the biggest shocker to me is the amount of research coming out on the Biohackers, the Metabolic [Health] Summits, Weston A. Price Foundation, all of these great organizations, Ph.D. researchers saying, "Oh my gosh, we need to stop and look at coconut-derived ketones and what it can do for turning on our brains." Of course, yes, it's good for the immune system. And yes, it's great antifungal, antiviral and antibacterial. But when it comes to providing cellular energy that gets into the brain, the research is really shockingly amazing. And yet, it hasn't really, a lot of that research hasn't trickled down as you would have expected to veterinary medicine.

Carmina O'Connor:

Yeah, that's true. I mean, I think part of it is a lot of, and I mean, I'm not a veterinarian, but I think because a lot of veterinarians rely on things that they're more familiar with, fish oil or glucosamine or those type of supplements. They're not really familiar with coconut oil necessarily. I think that's why.

Dr. Karen Becker:

And so let's talk a little bit about that, because I view coconut oil as the anti-inflammatory fat. So if I have any condition, anything that ends in 'itis.' Including, and I'm glad that you mentioned pancreatitis, because that's the one thing that I get more emails from other veterinarians saying, "What?" And you have to stop and explain that the shorter chain-fatty acids don't require lipase release. So it's non-taxing to the pancreas and it's kind of passively diffused through the GI tract.

Dr. Karen Becker:

I think they're now discovering that there may be some lymph involvement, that there could be some chylomicron involvement, but generally speaking, it's not this active digestive process that requires a tremendous amount of lipase that taxes the lymphatic system. Not at all. In fact, my first introduction to MCTs (medium-chain triglycerides) and my whole life was in veterinary school when they talked about using MCT, specifically formulated MCT oil for lymphangiectasia and chylomicron disease.

Dr. Karen Becker:

So, veterinarians have all heard of MCT oil. We just didn't connect it to coconut oil. So, that's something that I think veterinarians still are maybe okay with MCTs and for some reason there's a disconnect when it comes to the whole food source. I think integrative veterinarians or functional medicine doctors get that we always try to do the whole-food thing versus the piecing out and teasing out of fractionated parts and pieces of coconut oil.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Can you talk a little bit – a bunch of questions, but back to the original question of how does it serve the body? It works in a lot of ways, but anti-inflammatory is one mechanism. But it does not take the place of, let's say your omega-3 fatty acids. Are you suggesting to people, as I do, that they add to – like you don't stop your fish oil. A lot of people think, "Do I give flaxseed oil or fish oil or coconut oil?" And do you want to talk a little bit about how those are three totally different types of fats?

Charisa Antigua:

Yeah. Well yeah, totally different. First of all, fish oil is a long-chain polyunsaturated fat, so we know that it's not saturated. It's unsaturated. So it's processed in the body very differently. There are overlaps with benefits that we know, like they both, coconut oil and omega-3 oils or fish oil, supports the brain and heart health. But for example, if you look at how they support the brain, they do so in different ways.

Charisa Antigua:

So coconut oil converts to ketones, as we mentioned, which feeds the brain, it reduces the formation of amyloid plaque in the brain, the substance that causes Alzheimer's, and it reduces brain inflammation. Omega-3s or fish oil, forms neuro-transmitters called phosphatidylserine, and these are for brain function, these neurotransmitters that help your brain fire up and think. So they work differently in the body, so it helps to give them – it's nice to rotate as well. And coconut oil, unlike fish oil, is highly tolerated by animals with lipid disorders, for example. Camille had-

Carmina O'Connor:

PLE (Protein-Losing Enteropathy).

Charisa Antigua:

Yeah. PLE. And she could not tolerate a lot of fish oil, so I had to give her the coconut oil. And also, because it was antibacterial, antifungal, it helped her there. So there are inherent differences between Omega-3s and coconut oil. You don't have to stop giving one or the other. I mean, I always like to rotate the oils.

Dr. Karen Becker:

And you bring up a great point. When it comes to animals that need low-fat diets. That's one of those, so animals that have PLE or a lot of IBS (irritable bowel syndrome), IBD (inflammatory bowel disease), lymphangiectasia, veterinarians absolutely recommend a low-fat diet. But, it's interesting because you can absolutely put these patients on a low-fat diet and use coconut oil or MCTs as their source of therapeutic fats to help with that medical condition.

Dr. Karen Becker:

So, that's an important thing to explain. People say, "Well, I've got to be on a fat-free diet." You can be on a low-fat diet and supply the minimum fat requirements through these therapeutic fats in the forms of MCTs. And that's I think a really important point to make.

Charisa Antigua:

Absolutely.

Carmina O'Connor:

That's right.

Charisa Antigua:

She thrived on it. She needed her MCTs.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Have you found that people are coming to you asking if they have a pet medical condition, specifically, let's say a GI condition. Do you pick MCT oil to use differently than you would coconut oil? I mean, because those are two – how do those products differ in that you would pick MCT oil over coconut oil for a specific reason?

Carmina O'Connor:

Well, coconut oil, first of all, is about 64% medium-chain fatty acids. So the other, what is it, 30% whatever the math is-

Charisa Antigua:

- 37%.

Carmina O'Connor:

Yeah. I mean they do have some long-chain [fats]. They also do have some other fats. They also have, sorry, they also have some omega-3. They do have-

Charisa Antigua:

- very little. They have more omega-6 than Omega-3. They're 6% omegas.

Carmina O'Connor:

Omega-9 too. But anyway, there are differences. For a dog or an animal that is severely sensitive to fat, even coconut oil, we do recommend MCT more because it's got 93% medium-chain fatty acids and much less of the other, other fats.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Yeah. And that has been my point as well, that if you have a severely debilitated animal that needs an ultra-low-fat diet, go with the MCTs alone. But you shouldn't fear, in my opinion, you shouldn't fear MCTs. I think there's the second wave of people saying that maybe we shouldn't even be taking MCTs. And I find it fascinating because when you trace back where some of the confusion comes from, one of the inciting questions that I have had is a couple of veterinarians saying to me, "Well, where would dogs get coconut oil in the wild?" Certainly, there may have been Polynesian feral dogs 200 years ago, but all in all, dogs over the last 10,000 years, they didn't eat coconuts. So why are we feeding coconuts now? What do you say to that?

Charisa Antigua:

That's a good question.

Carmina O'Connor:

Well yeah, that's a really good question. But first of all, we're not claiming that coconut oil is a natural food that dogs eat in the wild. I mean, we obviously know that. But, the same could be said with green-lipped mussels or fish oil even, or fermented goat's milk, or kefir. I mean these are all functional foods that dogs in the wild don't have natural access to. So, why do people give these to their dogs? I think giving these foods to our dogs, I mean we consider them functional foods. They help to address or support various needs of dogs that a diet couldn't support, maybe. I mean we're not saying it's going to add to their diet in terms of nutritional value, but it's functional in terms of the way it treats certain conditions.

Charisa Antigua:

And Karen, we've also heard the argument, "Okay, so coconut oil is fine for you Filipinos or tropical dogs health care, right? But, it's not native to people in North America or Europe. So therefore, people or animals of those countries shouldn't be eating coconut oil." But, then I say the same argument can be used for olive oil. Olive oil is a Mediterranean diet. Historically, it was never in tropical countries or even North America. But, why are we all eating olive oil and loving it? It has wonderful health benefits and it was not part of our ancestral diet, but we love it.

Charisa Antigua:

So I think when people look up the equation about food, about whether or not we should be eating something, I think they sometimes forget to look at the bigger picture, which is our bodies. Our bodies, our dog's bodies, have been designed by God to react in a certain way, beautifully. So a dog's intestines, a dog's pancreas, a dog's liver will react in the appropriate way nature intended it, regardless of whether they're eating food that is naturally found to them in the wild, or whether it's food that has been supplied to them as needed for a functional need.

Carmina O'Connor:

I think where we're allowing food to be our medicine.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Yeah. And what's interesting is when you ask a lot of functional nutritionists on the human realm, and even when I pose this question to Dr. Mark Morris. Dr. Mark Morris was the Ph.D. wildlife biologist, the kind that helped our corner of the earth, who coined the term "biologically appropriate for dogs." He was the guy who did the research that let domesticated dogs and wild wolves, two cohorts, eat as much carb, protein and fat as they wanted. And then he just let them graze as much as they wanted over a period of time to see what they would choose instinctually on their own.

Dr. Karen Becker:

And absolutely, what he found, which helped corroborate all of us saying we need to feed dogs more of a biologically appropriate diet. He was talking about macronutrients, meaning, "What percentage of the diet is protein and what percentage of the diet was fat?" And what he found with both dogs and wild wolves is that if left to select on their own, all species of canines will first gorge on fat and once they have enough fat to nourish their brain, they will then gorge on protein. And very little, if any, carbohydrate. Less than 10%. They would nibble on carbohydrate. I think probably more for roughage. They needed some grasses for fiber, but they met their fiber requirement last with 10% carbohydrates.

Dr. Karen Becker:

They ate fat first. Then protein. When we look at the fats we have to offer our dogs, especially if we were going by this locale. Me growing up in Iowa, I would have corn oil to offer my dogs, which I would rather just not eat any oil than corn oil, right? So I do agree with your premise that we need to think of this as macronutrients. We need to think of it as the healthiest macronutrients we could be selecting for our dogs and cats. So when it comes to the fat category, some of the healthiest fats we absolutely could select for our pets, in my opinion, would be coconut oil. Because it is stable, it doesn't go rancid, it nourishes the body in ways that are low-stress metabolically. And this is proven over and over on the health side of things.

Dr. Karen Becker:

I just see summits all the time talking about, especially Lipids in Parenteral Nutrition summits, where they're really diving in to the science of how healthy fats so miraculously help humans cope with inflammation. And there's a lot of research coming out. But, the other thing you'll hear from in our side of the camp is there's no research on coconut oil. This is just people wantonly throwing something in the dish with very little research. So, what do you ladies say to people who come back to you and say, "There's no research on coconut oil. Why are you suggesting that we feed this, or eat it ourselves?"

Charisa Antigua:

Well, my first question is, did you even look? Because if you look, there are thousands of studies out there. There's a website called on PubMed.com-

Carmina O'Connor:

... .Org.

Charisa Antigua:

.Org. There's a search bar and you put coconut oil or virgin, put virgin coconut oil, you'll see thousands of research that comes out. If you put lauric acid, you'll see over 2,000 or close to 2,000 studies on coconut oil. If they say there are no studies, I don't think they really looked.

Carmina O'Connor:

They're not looking. But aside from that, coconut oil has been a part of Ayurvedic medicine for over 5,000 years. I mean, I know people say, "Well, that's anecdotal or blah, blah, blah. Those studies [are] not really true." But I mean, empirical evidence I think, or empirical proof, I don't know what you call it, but has demonstrated that it's been healthy. It's been part of a healthy diet. And it works. It supports health basically-

Charisa Antigua:

- thousands of years.

Carmina O'Connor:

But, for people who are real scientists, and need to see black-and-white science, and trials, clinical trials, it exists. It really does.

Dr. Karen Becker:

So if you guys had some parting thoughts on what you'd like the world to know about coconut oil pertaining to pets, what would it be?

Carmina O'Connor:

Well, the parting thought for us would be, since we were little, if we didn't have coconut oil, I think a lot of our pets would have been in trouble, because we have seen it, and even when we used to live in the Philippines and we used to see veterinarians and they would give us a diet for certain animals with certain conditions, it would always include coconut oil. I believe truly that the pets that I have here in the U.S., the ones I've had overseas, they've had coconut oil before it was even a fad, all their lives since I was little.

Carmina O'Connor:

And if it wasn't for coconut oil, I know it is a healthy fat, there are a lot of times where I feel like it would have, our animals might've not made it for certain conditions.

Charisa Antigua:

And I think too, if they're wary about coconut oil and they don't understand it, dig in and understand the science, because that's what it is. It's not snake oil, it's science. It's the way medium-chain fats are broken down in your body, it's the way our liver functions, et cetera. So once you understand the science or you understand something, I think you're less afraid of it. But, a lot of vets know the benefits, so that's good.

Carmina O'Connor:

I also think that because of this sudden boom, when it was healthy, everybody was saying, "It's healthy, it's healthy." So it sounded too good to be true almost. It was, instead of people talking about why it was healthy, they were saying, "It's good for this. It's good for your brain. It's good for immune system, it's good for your heart, it's good for your thyroid, et cetera, et cetera." And people were like, "Well, it's starting to sound a lot like snake oil or voodoo, voodoo medication."

Carmina O'Connor:

So I think that's part of the problem too. So they're starting to feel like, "Well all these promises, it's too good to be true. It's for ear infections, topically, oral, it's just so confusing." And then everybody, then you get the camp who says, "Well, why should they eat coconut oil? That's not a natural part of their diet." So, I think it's all this – we're rambling.

Charisa Antigua:

Just get educated, I think. Yeah, you're rambling.

Dr. Karen Becker:

No, that's actually really good advice. And I agree with you. I think that because coconut oil has just trended here, it's considered kind of a New Age, kind of fad supplement in the last 20 years. But, we have to stop and recognize that our country is relatively new compared to a bunch of other civilizations who have been consuming this food for thousands of years. So what appears to be as a trendy fad in the U.S., if you trace it back to its origins, it's an ancient healthful food that many cultures have relied on for themselves and their livestock for thousands of years. Healthfully and intuitively and naturally. And out

of that ancient wisdom, you've brought forth new knowledge to share with other parts of the country, other parts of the world, including the U.S., that is met with excitement, but also an ounce of skepticism. And then of course a backlash of a bunch of people deciding, "I don't know if I know enough about this, I'm not educated enough about it, I'm just going to blanket statement," don't do it.

Dr. Karen Becker:

And I think if people do, do their research, come to the conclusions themselves or talk to veterinarians like myself who has had just tremendous experience for several decades using coconut oil, you can begin to put some of your mind to rest as to whether you feel comfortable using it. And then once you do start using it, I think it's a slippery slope because you can't stop. It fixes one condition. So you use it for the next and the next. And then, as you mentioned, Carmina, you end up using it on all your pets for everything because you see the vast benefits of literally nose-to-tail improvement by incorporating this really beautiful fat into an animal's lifestyle.

Charisa Antigua:

Yeah. Well said. No, that's great.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Well, thank you ladies for sharing your wisdom and expertise about all things coconut oil with me this morning.

Carmina O'Connor:

Thank you.

Charisa Antigua:

Thanks for having us.

Carmina O'Connor:

Thank you for having us.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Thanks.