



## Taking It to the Streets: National Rally Against Greed in Health Care

**“What happens after we mobilize all of these people to demand that we remove profit from health care? That is a really, really important question, and I think that unions should play a large part of answering that question.” - Ana Malinow, MD**

*911. What's your emergency?*

*America's healthcare system is broken and people are dying.*

**Welcome to Code WACK!**, where we shine a light on America's callous healthcare system, how it hurts us and what we can do about it. I'm your host **Brenda Gazzar**.

This time on **Code WACK!** Single payer is back in the spotlight with lawmakers submitting new Medicare for all bills. Once more, how will the upcoming National Day of Action on May 31st help keep the need for healthcare reform in the spotlight? And how do physicians feel about single payer today? To find out, we spoke to **Dr. Ana Malinow**, who spent three decades working as a pediatrician with immigrant, refugee and underserved children before retiring as clinical professor of pediatrics from UC San Francisco School of Medicine. The past president of Physicians for a National Health Program, she's on the steering committee of **National Single Payer**. She's also a lead organizer for the

movement to end privatization of Medicare. Welcome back to Code WACK!, Dr. Malinow.

**Malinow:** Thank you. It's great to be back. Brenda.

***Q: In the last episode we talked about the National Day of Action for single payer on May 31st. What kind of pressure are you trying to create with this day of action and who are you hoping to influence?***

**Malinow:** We are trying to build an unstoppable movement, a movement that cannot be denied or placated or bought or intimidated. A movement of people who have suffered and are ready to say no more, who are aware of the corrupt system of wealthy corporations, of wealthy donors, and the bought-out politicians who keep hoping that we will settle for crumbs, who hope that we just go on the defensive to defend the status quo when what we really need to do is to go on the offensive and say, 'no, we don't want, you know, what the Trump administration is giving us, but we also don't wanna go back to the status quo.' We need to demand that which is achievable, but only if we stand up together and demand.

***Q: So back in 1961, the American Medical Association had Ronald Reagan record an LP warning against quote unquote socialized medicine, meaning single-payer healthcare or universal health care. A lot has changed since then. So where do doctors stand today? Are more physicians supporting single payer now and what's being done to bring more on board?***

**Malinow:** Well, fortunately things have changed for the better since 1961. Unfortunately, the American Medical Association has not changed its tune. But what I always like to say is that only 19 – 19% – of physicians belong to the American Medical Association. So the AMA does not speak for the vast majority of doctors. They do have power. They have political influence. They have money, but they do not represent physicians. And I think that that's very important. So yes, I think that the mood of physicians has changed. More physicians support a national health program. There was a study that was – it's kind of old now – it was published in 2009, but even then they found that over 50% of physicians supported a national health program, and I think that the support is much greater

now sixteen years later. We talked a little bit about moral injury, also known as burnout.

And since then we have seen a lot more participation of physicians in unions, more militancy among physicians who have lost the ability to practice medicine, as I said. And I think that physicians are dissatisfied with just making money for a health system. That's not what they went into medicine to do. So as far as what we can do to bring in more physicians, I think that can you imagine if, for the National Day of Action on May 31, we had thousands and thousands, hundreds of thousands of healthcare workers on the street demanding a national single-payer healthcare system free from profit. I think that that would be tremendous.

Can you imagine hundreds of thousands of healthcare workers stopping work, withholding their work? What would that do to the country? That would just stop our healthcare system on its tracks? And I'm not saying that, you know, we shouldn't continue the work at the ICUs, you know, any kind of work that is there to preserve lives needs to continue. I'm not saying that that needs to be stopped and that work needs to be withheld, but all other work. Yes. Can you imagine if healthcare workers stood up together to withhold their labor and to say 'enough, what we need right now is a national healthcare system, free from profit, publicly, finance without any profit, any margins, all not-for-profit,' what would happen? Things would stop. People would pay attention. And that would be the ideal for May 31.

***Q: So is this being marketed or promoted as a strike day for healthcare workers as well?***

**Malinow:** It isn't. No. May 31 is a National Day of Action where we are trying to get people out on the streets to demand that we remove profit from healthcare. Now what's going to happen on June 1 <laugh>, the day after. Right. That is open for discussion. Yes. We have to think about the day after. Right? What happens after we mobilize all of these people to demand that we remove profit from health care? That is a really, really important question, and I think that unions should play a large part of answering that question.

Yeah.

**Malinow:** Sean Fain from the United Auto Workers has called for a national strike May 1st, 2028. And one of the central demands is the implementation of Medicare for All. Yeah. It might be too late for some people for 68,000 people every year, it will be too late. But I'm happy that he called for a national strike. Absolutely. And, and you know, putting Medicare for all front and center.

***Q: Wow. Has there been anything like the National Day of Action before where there were multiple Medicare for All rallies in multiple cities across the country?***

**Malinow:** Yes. Okay. So in 2021 at the height of the pandemic, the March for Medicare for All held rallies across the country, and I believe that about 54 cities participated in this national rally for Medicare for All. And it was just remarkable because this very, very small organization called the March for Medicare for All was able to organize activists from across the country in 54 different cities to hold local actions. And I think what helped was the fact that we were in the middle of a pandemic, which is if you cannot have a better reason to have a national health program <laugh> [than] during a pandemic, I just don't know what it is. And I think that they capitalized on that mood in the country then.

***Q: Beautiful. So how does this fight for Medicare for All connect with other justice movements like labor rights, racial justice, reproductive justice, or even climate justice?***

**Malinow:** Well, great question and a really, really important question because there is a direct line from healthcare justice to every other social justice movement, not only in this country, but actually internationally. If we had healthcare as a human right, which I believe we should have, unions would be able to bargain on work conditions, not about healthcare benefits. So that's how labor would benefit. If health care were free at the point of care. Everyone of every race, of every ethnicity would have access to healthcare equitably. A national health program would include all necessary medical services, including comprehensive reproductive care, abortion, contraception, and assistive reproductive technology. And finally, to bring in climate, climate is about health and wellbeing for the population. Global warming creates disasters, displacement, and disease. And as we fight for healthcare as a human right, we also fight for climate justice for all.

***Q: Got it. What role are healthcare workers and unions playing in the single-payer movement? Are we seeing more of them show up and speak out this year?***

**Malinow:** I think that this has been a wonderful development. As we talked about, I think that the growth of unions among healthcare workers is tremendous. We have seen amazing work by the Kaiser healthcare workers on strike here in California. We know that the number one demand at every single labor negotiation is healthcare benefits and that the concessions when they are won, are concessions that not necessarily increase wages that much, but that the concessions won go towards paying for health insurance. So those concessions go directly from the pockets of workers to the pockets of large health insurance companies.

Mm-Hmm <affirmative>.

**Malinow:** So that's why I think that healthcare workers need to rise up and say, no, I am done having my labor extracted to go to pad the pockets of large corporations. No, I want that money to come back to me for my own wellbeing, for my family's well being. For my community's well being. That's where the money needs to stay.

***Q: Is National single Payer, which is spearheading the National Day of Action, reaching out to healthcare unions to participate?***

**Malinow:** Yes, absolutely. We have many unions that have endorsed. As a matter of fact, on April 7th, the Railroad Workers United endorsed the National Day of Action, and then smaller unions have as well. So I am very, very proud of that development.

***Q: So in your view, what's the biggest roadblock right now to single-payer healthcare and what will it take to get past it?***

**Malinow:** Well, the biggest roadblock to single payer healthcare is money. And we talked about this before. It's the profits that are being made by the large health insurance corporations and by corporations like BlackRock that make money off of health care, that is making money off of workers. And that is making money off of denying healthcare because that's the business model. That's the only way you

can make money if you're an insurance company. So it's the profit that then gets trickled down to campaign contributions that corrupt the elected officials that fix the rule of the game so that corporations can make greater profit, which then increases the campaign contributions, which corrupts politicians even more that game the system even more. So I think that is the biggest barrier for us.

***Thank you, Dr. Ana Malinow of National Single Payer. To find out what's happening in your area on May 31 during the National Day of Action, go to [nationalsinglepayer.com](http://nationalsinglepayer.com).***

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