



End of Year Review 2023

PHYSICIANS FOR A NATIONAL HEALTH PROGRAM | 29 E. MADISON STREET, SUITE 1412, CHICAGO, IL 60602 | PNHP.ORG

PNHP report sounds the alarm on Medicare Advantage

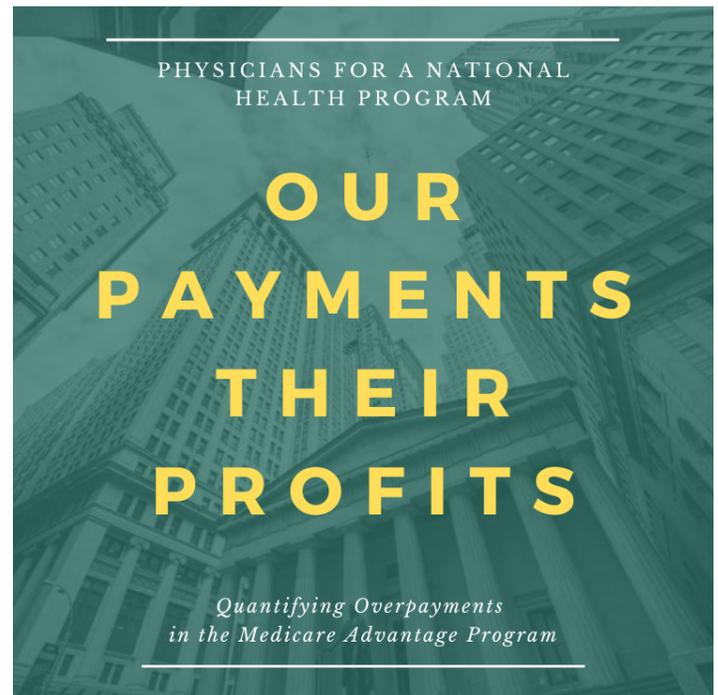
In October, PNHP released a report entitled “Our Payments, Their Profits,” which quantified the egregious levels of money taken by private Medicare Advantage (MA) insurers from the Medicare trust fund. This report, developed by PNHP’s policy committee and reviewed by several independent health policy experts, aggregated for the first time all major studies and analyses of the different methods by which MA plans receive far more money than they use for patient care.

The results were shocking; while recent estimates of yearly MA overpayments by various parties range from a few billion dollars to \$75 billion, the true number is even higher. Insurers take at minimum \$88 billion, and potentially up to \$140 billion in excess payments per year from Medicare.

The report additionally detailed a number of proposals to bolster Traditional Medicare, which could be easily paid for by the money given away to private insurers. The low-end estimate of \$88 billion per year would cover dental, vision, and hearing benefits for everybody on Traditional Medicare, as well as everybody on Medicaid. The higher-end estimate of \$140 billion would totally eliminate premiums for all beneficiaries enrolled in Medicare Part B, with money left over.

Following its release at pnhp.org/MAReport, the report received coverage from a number of publications, including *The Lever*, *Medical Economics*, and even the *KFF Health News Daily Briefing*. In addition, PNHP conducted a series of briefings with various Congressional offices and health policy experts on the findings of the report, and will continue to

do so throughout the rest of the year. We encourage you to use this report and its figures in op-eds, letters to the editor, conversations with colleagues, and more—especially during Medicare’s open enrollment period. PNHP will continue to fight corporate profiteering in Medicare, which represents an existential threat to the single-payer movement.



Spotlight on Success: Telling our stories about Medicare Advantage

“Under Medicare Advantage
I had to give a patient a trial of a medication I knew would not work
well for her in order to prove
it did not work.”

While the data and facts contained in the report are crucial parts of our campaign against Medicare Advantage, we have also collected stories through a survey of physicians and patients asking about their experiences with the program. In a webinar kicking off our campaign, we read aloud powerful quotes taken from the surveys that displayed the strength of personal stories. These included instances of being forced to prescribe or take ineffective medication, being denied life-saving surgery, and feeling betrayal at being lured into a plan with big promises, only to be left with no support after becoming ill.

Speaking truth to power: PNHP members advocate for Medicare for All legislation

In May, Senator Bernie Sanders and Representatives Pramila Jayapal and Debbie Dingell introduced in both houses of Congress the Medicare for All Act of 2023. Senator Sanders and Representative Jayapal held a town hall meeting before the bills were introduced, where PNHP leaders Dr. Adam Gaffney and Dr. Sanjeev Sriram spoke on the need for this crucial legislation.

“As a critical care physician, I have seen patients with life-threatening illnesses from chronic conditions that were not treated because they could not afford the care,” said Dr. Gaffney. “Medicare for All will solve that.”

Dr. Sriram remarked on the latest crisis in American health care, the Medicaid unwinding process, which has re-

moved at least 10 million vulnerable people from coverage. “If you don’t pick up the phone at the right time, or if you don’t fill out a form correctly,” he said, “your family and your kids could lose your Medicaid. We need a better system.”

The Medicare for All Act of 2023 included a number of improvements and changes to the previous version of the bill in the areas of women’s and LGBTQ+ health, which have both been under attack across the country. All reproductive health care, including abortion care and contraception, are now explicitly covered under this legislation, and the same is true of all gender-affirming care.

PNHP additionally put together and sent to members of Congress an organizational sign-on letter laying out the policy benefits of the bill and explaining how they would fix the dire state of our system. This letter was signed by over 100 organizations, including groups such as the American Medical Student Association, the California Alliance for Retired Americans, and the Abortion Coalition for Telemedicine Access.

For more information on the Medicare for All bills, you can visit our informational page at pnhp.org/legislation. Here you can read about the bills and use our simple web-form to send an email message to your representative and both of your senators, based on whether or not they have co-sponsored. You can customize this message to your liking, or simply click “send.”

The Medicare for All Act of 2023 is known as H.R. 3421 in the U.S. House and S. 1655 in the U.S. Senate. Visit Congress.gov to see if your representatives have co-sponsored these bills. To get involved with PNHP’s efforts, email lori@pnhp.org.



(from L-R) Dr. Adam Gaffney and Dr. Sanjeev Sriram speak at a Medicare for All town hall in Washington, D.C. in May.

Spotlight on Success: Celebrating 35 Years of PNHP

All year, PNHP has been celebrating our 35th anniversary! This celebration culminated at the Annual Meeting in November, where members gathered for a special 35th anniversary dinner. PNHP leaders took the stage to honor many of the people responsible for making the organization what it is today, including co-founders Drs. David Himmelstein and Steffie Woolhandler, past presidents, and longtime members. Presenters also showcased key moments in PNHP’s history, and there were even special anniversary messages from Sen. Bernie Sanders, Rep. Pramila Jayapal, and countless national allies who share our vision for single-payer Medicare for All!



A milestone victory: PNHP's campaign against ACO REACH

Ever since the rebranding of President Trump's Direct Contracting program as ACO REACH in early 2022, PNHP has led the charge against this dangerous attempt to privatize Traditional Medicare. REACH allows third-party entities (often private insurers) to administer Traditional Medicare benefits. Under this program, seniors and people with disabilities who specifically choose a public plan are instead pushed into private management, often without their knowledge or consent.

PNHP led a coalition of over 300 grassroots organizations from across the country—representing seniors, people with disabilities, workers, medical professionals, and community advocates—to demand an end to the program. We were joined in our efforts by members of Congress and thousands of individual activists.

After months of campaigning, raising the alarm, and placing consistent pressure on the Biden administration, our work paid off. In a speech given to the California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) on January 17, Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) Director Liz Fowler revealed that REACH will fall well short of its stated goals, and that there are no plans to further expand the controversial model.

Speaking about REACH at CalPERS' Board Education Day, Fowler stated, "We have no plans to open up another application period...there will not be any more than 132 organizations in the model, and most likely no more than 2.1 million beneficiaries in the model."

While the fight to end the program immediately and permanently is not over, PNHP's victory on REACH demonstrates the power of our activism and the importance of



PNHP National Coordinator Dr. Claudia Fegan participates in our Stop REACH photo petition effort.

fighting to protect Medicare as the necessary foundation for a true single-payer health care system. We will continue these efforts in our current campaign against Medicare Advantage.

Spotlight on Success: Summer house parties raise money and bring in new faces

As part of our 35th anniversary campaign, members across the country held fundraising house parties over the summer. At these parties, members put together food, activities, and discussions themed around health policy and single payer, and made an appeal for attendees to donate to PNHP and join the organization. These parties were a huge success—guests had fun, learned about health justice, and donated to PNHP. We were able to raise a total of \$31,000 across 15 parties, with the highest-raising party pulling in over \$7,000! Several attendees also signed up for PNHP membership. Thank you to everybody who hosted house parties for PNHP's 35th anniversary!



Meet new board member Dr. Alankrita Olson!



Tell us about yourself! I'm Alankrita Olson, a PGY2 in Preventive Medicine and Public Health at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. I became involved with PNHP during medical school, during which time I escalated my involvement from SNaHP chapter president to Chicago SNaHP coalition lead and then SNaHP Executive Board Member. I have presented at SNaHP and PNHP annual meetings, organized single-payer direct actions such as the AMA action of 2019, worked with local single-payer politicians, and lobbied federal representatives.

What do you hope to contribute to PNHP as a board member? As a new Board Member, I hope to provide a fresh voice and the perspective of a younger generation. With my experience in activism, I also hope to help PNHP continue to develop its objectives from serving mainly to educate others on single-payer to advocacy and direct action. Therefore, I would like to contribute to strategic planning and program development, especially when it comes to getting younger physicians and medical students involved.

Dr. Olson is joined on the board this term by the following newly elected members: Dr. Hugh Foy, Dr. Carol Paris, and Dr. Brian Yablon.



PNHP joined People's Action for a nationwide series of "Care Over Cost" rallies on Oct. 11. Photo: Deana Rutherford

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