

America's largest medical specialty society endorses single-payer Medicare for All

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Physicians for a National Health Program (PNHP) today welcomed the American College of Physicians' (ACP) endorsement of single-payer Medicare for All. The ACP, a national organization of 159,000 internists, is the largest medical specialty society and second-largest physician group in the U.S. after the American Medical Association (AMA).

The ACP announced its endorsement of Medicare for All in a special supplement to its official journal, the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, where the group also endorsed a "universal public choice" reform model.

The ACP endorsement coincides with the publication of an open letter signed by more than 2,000 physicians "prescribing" Medicare for All, an effort organized by advocates separately from the ACP. Among the "prescribers" are towering figures in American medicine, including Dr. Marcia Angell, former editor-in-chief of the *New England Journal of Medicine*; Dr. Bernard Lown, developer of the defibrillator; Dr. Paul Farmer, infectious disease expert and founder of Partners in Health; and Dr. Mary Bassett, former New York City Health Commissioner. The letter will appear as an advertisement in the New York Times the week of January 20.

Along with the ACP's position paper, the *Annals of Internal Medicine* published an editorial by PNHP co-founders Drs. Steffie Woolhandler and David Himmelstein. Drs. Woolhandler and Himmelstein, noting that organized medicine had opposed national health insurance for a century,

called the ACP's new position "a sea change for the medical profession."

The ACP's endorsement of Medicare for All and the publication of the open letter reflects growing support for single-payer reform among physicians. Recent surveys have found that half of all doctors now favor national [health](#) insurance. Last June, the AMA's House of Delegates only narrowly defeated a resolution that would have rescinded its long-standing opposition to Medicare for All. Under pressure from Medicare for All supporters, the AMA then resigned from the dark money group Partnership for America's Health Care Future, which opposes single-payer reform.

"As physicians, we see daily the harm that our fragmented, private-insurance based system does to our patients," noted Dr. Adam Gaffney, President of PNHP and a pulmonary and critical care [physician](#) at Harvard Medical School and the Cambridge Health Alliance. "Patients go without the care they need, and physicians squander time and resources on wasteful billing and clerical tasks. Medicare for All would be a much better way—for patients and doctors both."

According to Dr. Woolhandler, a Distinguished Professor at the City University of New York at Hunter College and Lecturer in Medicine at Harvard Medical School, "When we started PNHP, doctors who supported single-payer reform were considered radicals, and reporters likened us to 'furriers for animal rights'. Now we're squarely in the mainstream of the medical profession. More and more doctors have realized—often from talking to our Canadian colleagues—that single payer is the only way to cut insurers' paperwork and profits that siphon hundreds of billions annually from care in the U.S." Dr. Woolhandler is a Fellow of the ACP, but not an official spokesperson for that organization.

More information: Ryan Crowley et al, Envisioning a Better U.S.

Health Care System for All: Coverage and Cost of Care, *Annals of Internal Medicine* (2020). [DOI: 10.7326/M19-2415](https://doi.org/10.7326/M19-2415)

"The American College of Physicians' Endorsement of Single-Payer Reform: A Sea Change for the Medical Profession," by Steffie Woolhandler, M.D., M.P.H., and David Himmelstein, M.D. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, published online ahead of print January 20, 2020.

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