

# Death Panel Podcast

## TRANSCRIPT: Welcome to Medicare for All Week 2021

### SPEAKERS

UK Daniel (Beatrice's Screen Reader Software), Vince Patti, Justin Feldman, Artie Vierkant, Dean Spade, Philip Rocco, Libby Watson, Beatrice Adler-Bolton, Dr. Adam Gaffney

Air date: 8 February, 2021 — Transcript is slightly edited for clarity.

### Justin Feldman 00:01

Medicare for All, is not just about fixing the problem of uninsurance, it's about fixing the problem of this sort of health care apartheid, that that exists...

### Libby Watson 00:10

These imaginary cases where someone looks up and finds out a hospital is out of network and is like, "I'm gonna go to it anyway. I'll try to trick my insurance company into paying for this out of network care." I don't give a shit if you do that, you should still have your fucking heart attack paid for! 'No one should have a medical bill' is a very important concept to me. Whether it's a surprise or not...

### Dr. Adam Gaffney 00:34

Everyone knows that inequality is rising in society, we usually think about inequality in terms of economic inequality, rightfully so that's a big part of it. But I think the rise of health inequality, or people are sort of familiar with it, doesn't get as much emphasis, the life expectancy between rich and poor has been widening...

### Dean Spade 00:53

Our tiered public benefits systems are really unusual, globally, all of our systems are so broken up that way with these super strong, racialized and gendered messages about who's in each tier and to do Medicare for All is really to undo that potentially, I mean, it changes who fights for that program. And who's in the 'us' and that is *super threatening* to the way the US has organized all of its 'let's care for the people' type of systems as very inadequate and small as they are...

### Arrianna M. Planey 01:26

Health systems are spending billions of dollars on, well, what they are calling social determinants of health, to improve, well, they call it population health, but what it really is, is the health of a subset of the population that currently has insurance coverage, and may be a potential patient, typically patient. So it's not actually population health it's more customers. It's their customer base...

### Dr. Adam Gaffney 02:00

All we can do is fight like hell for [Medicare for All] today, because if we don't do that today it's never going to be a reality tomorrow.

**Intro Music** 02:15  
[theme music plays]

**Philip Rocco** 02:33  
All right, let's hit it.

**Beatrice Adler-Bolton** 02:34  
Welcome to the second annual Medicare for All Week from the Death Panel, six straight interviews about Medicare for All — this is the second year that we're doing it last year, was all about looking at the history of the single payer movement, looking at current movements for health justice, and the framing of the policy and the reasons behind it. But this year is totally different and so much bigger. This year is all about building power, and looking at other ways that Medicare for All can disrupt and destabilize current systems of power.

**Artie Vierkant** 03:07  
And I couldn't think crucially, one of the things that we wanted to talk about, you know, obviously, there's a lot to talk about in terms of Medicare for All, single payer, and the broader movement for health justice. I know a lot of people wanted us to talk about, for example, what an American NHS could do in the context of the Coronavirus pandemic, and things like that. So you'll notice that there's a lot of that there's not an episode, specifically just dedicated to that, but we brought it up with a lot of people that we talk to. And in addition to that I think a lot of what we focus on this year is building outside of an electoral cycle contest because our first annual Medicare for All Week if you look at it, literally. I don't know if you guys remember, last year, we timed this to the week between Iowa, like the Iowa caucuses and New Hampshire.

**Vince Patti** 04:03  
Could not could not have picked a better week... [laughs]

**Philip Rocco** 04:06  
Strange Days to think about now. Yeah, different worlds.

**Artie Vierkant** 04:10  
Yeah, remember when Pete Buttigieg just had won the Iowa caucus?

**Philip Rocco** 04:16  
All too well. But I feel like this year...

**Vince Patti** 04:18  
That was such a simpler time. The Coronavirus was only a...a glimmer in...uh...

**Beatrice Adler-Bolton** 04:26

...a zoonotic reservoir?

**Vince Patti** 04:29

Yeah.

**Artie Vierkant** 04:29

The Coronavirus was not yet a virus replicating within you?

**Vince Patti** 04:33

Yeah!

**Philip Rocco** 04:36

No, but it's amazing to me like just how much different themes came up in our conversations that we weren't even intending to bring up like last year was, it was a conversation about health finance and people who didn't have insurance and yeah, those things are obviously in all these conversations because that's part of the demand for justice, but this year, I'm trying to think, we talked with like Adam Gaffney about the potential impact that Medicare for All could have on just the supply of health care facilities and the quality of hospitals. I mean, it's really pretty amazing just how much you miss when you look at just one little facet of the debate.

**Artie Vierkant** 05:23

Yeah and I think that people, I think, well, yeah, not to go on too long about it, because this is just, you know, this is a short little introduction. But I can confirm the people that will be people that will be joining us over the next week for, as Bea mentioned, six full episodes all in the main public feed. So if you like this, or if you're finding the podcast, just because of Medicare for All Week, make sure you subscribe, leave us a rating and then also if you can support us on Patreon — [patreon.com/deathpanelpod](https://patreon.com/deathpanelpod) — but I will say so many things touch this conversation. It's not just it, I think what [Medicare for All] does get reduced sometimes to this, like, just health finance or just just public health insurance. And it is and can be so much more than that and Medicare for All in the broader fight for health justice, I think, really touches on so many things. And that's why I think especially one of the things that I'm really excited for people to hear is how towards the back half of the week, we start getting into what Medicare for All can learn from the Abolition movement, and also what kind of a position having something like Medicare for All puts us in in order to push for bigger demands. So let me just go through our guests, not necessarily in this order, for this year: journalist, Libby Watson of [Sick Note](#), who I think is going to be first and the only one that I definitely know, unless I cut this part. It's the only one that I definitely know is going to be first.

**Beatrice Adler-Bolton** 07:12

Aw Libby's is such a good one to go first, though. Yeah, I think, yeah.

**Artie Vierkant** 07:15

Adam Gaffney, who Phil mentioned

**Philip Rocco** 07:18

Incredible.

**Artie Vierkant** 07:19

Arrianna Planey, who is a medical geographer.

**Beatrice Adler-Bolton** 07:22

Oh, that conversation is so good too.

**Artie Vierkant** 07:24

You're going to love it.

**Beatrice Adler-Bolton** 07:25

Really makes you rethink what we're trying to redistribute when we're talking about stuff like this.

**Artie Vierkant** 07:31

Social epidemiologist Justin Feldman. Activist, lawyer and all-around-great-guy, Dean Spade. I don't know how else to introduce Dean.

**Vince Patti** 07:44

Stand-up-dude?

**Beatrice Adler-Bolton** 07:45

Dean is an all around great guy. Yeah.

**Artie Vierkant** 07:48

And then a conversation about the economics angle of everything with two economists both of whom come from slightly differing perspectives about what the single payer "pay for" question gets wrong, often, and how from both of their differing perspectives on economics, Medicare for All is a pretty great no brainer idea.

**Beatrice Adler-Bolton** 08:16

Yeah.

**Artie Vierkant** 08:17

So that's our, that's our lineup for this year.

**Beatrice Adler-Bolton** 08:19

I mean, it's so much more than just a straightforward appraisal of what this policy is and who it affects and I think it's always important to keep in mind how urgent these things are, but also how so interconnected Medicare for All is with so many other movements for justice, and so many other priorities. And I think, especially during this pandemic, we need to be thinking about ways to coalition build and to lend support and strength to other movements and other fights through everyone's own political home.

**Vince Patti 08:56**

Yeah, I mean, imagining bigger futures and then building coalitions to get there is kind of kind of what we're all about here.

**Beatrice Adler-Bolton 09:04**

Yeah. And I mean, what do we always say? Medicare for all now. Solidarity forever. Stay alive another week.

**Artie Vierkant 09:13**

This week especially.

**Beatrice Adler-Bolton 09:15**

Especially this week.

**Artie Vierkant 09:16**

Especially for Medicare for All Week.

**Beatrice Adler-Bolton 09:18**

Exactly.

**Vince Patti 09:18**

You're gonna be kicking yourself if you die this week.

**Beatrice Adler-Bolton 09:21**

Stay alive for Medicare for All Week and then live every week like it's Medicare for All Week. Yes, and if you can, please leave us a rating or review. Please tell your friends about the show, share Medicare for All Week become a patron at [www.patreon.com/deathpanelpod](http://www.patreon.com/deathpanelpod) so that we can keep doing stuff like this because we love to do it, but an incredible amount of time and work goes into curating and putting together a series like this. So...

**Philip Rocco 09:53**

Yeah, if you like zany stunts, and you want more of them...

**Artie Vierkant 09:58**

...then support us, exactly.

**UK Daniel (Beatrice's Screen Reader Software) 10:00**

This has been Medicare for All Week from the Death Panel. Medicare for All Week is an annual series presenting brand new interviews with activists, researchers, and others on building power toward Medicare for All, why we need it, and how to win it. Up first: in today's interview, we speak with journalist Libby Watson about how American media frame healthcare choices as an individual responsibility and how a politics of incrementalism gets it all wrong. To support our show and to help make series like Medicare for All Week possible, subscribe to our patreon at [www.patreon.com/deathpanelpod](http://www.patreon.com/deathpanelpod).