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Rally urges Medicare for all

by [BENNETT HALL Corvallis Gazette-Times](#)

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About a dozen health care activists braved wind-driven showers Friday afternoon to demonstrate for universal health care in the heart of the city's medical complex.

Wearing parkas and rain boots, the group occupied a stretch of sidewalk on Northwest Elks Drive in front of the main Corvallis Clinic building and across the street from the Samaritan Health Services cancer center.

The demonstrators, most of them members of Mid-Valley Health Care Advocates, chanted slogans such as "Everybody in, nobody out" and toted signs that read "Medicare for all" and "Medicare: extend it, don't end it."

Some wore placards that read "Health insurance is like a hospital gown: expensive, flimsy, and it doesn't cover your bottom," with artificial derrieres strapped on over their clothes to underscore the point.

Retired Corvallis physician Mike Huntington, one of the event's organizers, said the rally was aimed at building support for "Medicare for all," a plan to extend the federally subsidized health insurance plan for older Americans to the rest of the country as well. Backers of the idea have been trying to get a bill through Congress for more than a decade, but it has attracted additional support since the election of President Donald Trump, whose vow to repeal the Affordable Care Act has stoked fears of lost coverage.

"There are a lot of people who have never been political who have come forward in the last three months," Huntington said.

Susie Palmrose is not a member of Mid-Valley Health Care Advocates but decided to join the demonstration after learning about it on social media.

"I believe health care should be available for all equally, no matter what," she said. "And I believe we should be putting our money into taking care of people and not warfare."

Dagmar Johnson said the group chose their location in part because they wanted to catch the attention of medical providers at Samaritan Health Services and The Corvallis Clinic.

"We just feel there's so much awareness right now, it's a good time to bring this to the forefront," she said.

One medical professional who took note was Corvallis Clinic CEO Brad Wakefield, who joined the demonstrators long enough to pass out candy and briefly wave a sign.

"Some of the things they were protesting about — insurance company denials, lack of insurance coverage — we don't like those things either," he said. "We want our patients to be able to get health care."

However, he's not yet convinced that single payer health care is entirely practical — especially if it means providers would be stuck with low Medicare reimbursement rates for all their patients.

“Some of the details we would have to negotiate,” he said.

Mid-Valley Health Care Advocates is planning another demonstration at the same location from 2:30 to 5 p.m. today as part of a “national day of action” in support of Medicare for all.

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