

PNHP Board & Activist Conference Call

June 23, 2016, 8 p.m. Central time

Present: approximately 30 callers including Jerry Earll, MD (DC); Claudia Fegan, MD (IL); Harvey Fernbach, MD (MD); Jeff Gee, MD (CA); Pam Gronemeyer, MD (IL); Emily Henkels (staff, IL); David Himmelstein, MD (NY); Emily Kirchner (PA); Don Mitchell, MD (WA); George Pauk, MD (AZ); Matthew Petty (staff, IL); Richard Propp, MD (NY); Bill Reed, MD (IL); Mary O'Brien, MD (NY); Jessica Schorr Saxe, MD (NC); Gordy Schiff, MD (MA); Paul Song, MD (CA); Walter Tsou, MD (PA); Steffie Woolhandler, MD (NY); and Robert Zarr, MD (DC)

The call was moderated by PNHP president Dr. Robert Zarr.

1. Building the single payer movement

Dr. Paul Song reported on the NNU-sponsored People's Summit in Chicago the past weekend. The conference was attended by many supporters of Sen. Sanders. Overall, Dr. Song thought it a positive experience. There were many mentions of single payer and Medicare for All, as it was one of the top 3 or 4 issues of the conference. Dr. Song ran a breakout session with Donna Smith on the topic. His presentation focused on the merits of single payer and the history of our broken health care system, and he received many requests for his PowerPoint. He also promoted the recent works by Drs. David Himmelstein and Steffie Woolhandler responding to attacks on single-payer financing. The conference is likely to be continued as an annual event.

Dr. Fernbach asked about how to keep the movement for single payer going forward. Dr. Song noted that we need to continue to educate people about single payer, as many still don't know what it is, despite the elevation of the topic by the Sanders campaign. In the immediate near-term, Ben Day was circulating a petition in support of getting single payer onto the Democratic party platform.

Emily Henkels, who attended the Summit with Matt Petty, noted that Dr. Song was an excellent ambassador for PNHP, as he was identified as a PNHP board member. His workshop was one of the largest workshops at the conference and had a longer time slot than the others. The main directive coming out of the conference was that people should run for local office on a progressive agenda.

Dr. Steffie Woolhandler was invited testify and submit the Physicians' Proposal to the DNC Platform Drafting Committee, which met in Phoenix. The committee has 4 Sanders appointees, 5 Clinton appointees, and 4 DNC appointees. Her testimony went well in the sense that it elicited many comments from committee members, including some contentious back and forth with Neera Tanden, Hillary Clinton's issues director, who defended the ACA and continually attacked single-payer supporters. Tanden suggested single-payer proponents must be opposed to the ACA and advocating repeal, even though that's not the case. More supportive comments came from Cornel West, James Zogby, and Deborah Parker. A clip of Dr. Woolhandler's testimony is on the PNHP website. Moving forward, the committee will consider a single-payer proposal at their June markup meeting.

Dr. Walter Tsou said that many people are interested in organizing a demonstration and march around the DNC, with something like 20 already being put together informally. The bigger events will be on the opening day, Monday, July 25. The March for Our Lives will feature single payer in its economic policies that would help poor people. Emily Kirchner noted that some SNaHP students are also working on the March for Our Lives, and there's potential action at BCBS in the planning stages.

2. Welcome to new student board members

Dr. Zarr welcomed the new student board members, Emily Kirchner (M4, Temple), Janine Petito (M4, Boston University), and Bryant Shuey (M3, University of New Mexico). They join Anand Saha (M3, East Tennessee) and Vanessa Van Doren (M3, Case Western) and the student representatives on PNHP's Board of Directors.

3. Resident welcome month

June is resident welcome month, and Dr. Zarr encouraged call participants to check the link in the agenda announcement to the list of first-year incoming residents, sorted by location.

4. Chapter and activist reports

In California, Dr. Jeff Gee hosted a resident welcome dinner a couple weeks ago. Outgoing student board member Scott Goldberg, an incoming intern at USCF Internal Medicine, invited his entire incoming group to the dinner, resulting in 19 attendees. Residents from other programs were from the Santa Clara Valley. They group is starting a Google group to stay in touch.

In Charlotte, NC, Dr. Jessica Schorr Saxe reported that the Healthcare Justice group had a membership meeting last month and showed Fix It with a panel of business representatives. At least a couple of the business people said they disagreed with everything in the movie, but the event was well received overall. They identified several new people at the event. The chapter also participated in a Medicaid expansion day in Raleigh last month. And the chapter is trying to build student and resident interest, which is difficult because Charlotte only hosts M3s and M4s, but they have a couple residents interested in helping to recruit students.

Dr. Zarr added that he also participated in a screening of Fix It, this one in the Rayburn House Office Building. The screening had the largest turnout of any single-payer briefing he has seen on the Hill.

From New York Metro, Dr. Mary O'Brien reported that the chapter participated in a lobby day in Albany on May 25 supporting the New York Health Act, which passed the Assembly on June 1 for the second year in a row. In the state Senate, they have 22 cosponsors and need 10 more for passage. The chapter also held their annual gala on June 1, honoring Jack Geiger, Mary Dewar, and Lewis Goldfrank. Len Rodberg is working on long-term care aspects for the New York Health Act, and the chapter will have a strategy session for the coming year in terms of student and health professional outreach.

Dr. Bill Reed hosted a resident welcome dinner at his home, and they are aiming to hold regular meetings going forward. Almost all of the Chicago-area medical schools now have SNaHP chapters, and they would like to hold monthly meetings for everyone. In his home base in Southern Wisconsin, Dr. Reed is talking to local business groups.

From Albany, Dr. Richard Propp noted that the local chapter, chaired by Dr. David Ray, showed Fix It about four times in local venues, and in one case they were invited back to show the Healthcare Movie.

5. Announcements

Dr. Zarr acknowledged Dr. Claudia Fegan, who was honored by Modern Healthcare as one of “10 Minority Executives to Watch.”

The Annual Meeting and Leadership Training will *not* be held the same weekend as APHA this year, mostly because we went to meet *after* the election. This is the time to start outreach to potential students, residents, and colleagues who may want to attend the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Matthew Petty