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## The Not So Great Oz

### Dr. Oz Would Exacerbate Medicare Privatization if Confirmed as CMS Administrator

Insurance companies and their political allies are trying to eviscerate and privatize Medicare and seniors and people with disabilities are suffering as a result. If Dr. Mehmet Oz is confirmed as the Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), these attacks are likely to move into overdrive. Dr. Oz has endorsed [expanding privatized Medicare](#), which would leave more Americans at the whim of greedy health insurance corporations. We should be strengthening Medicare by improving it, not weakening it through further privatization.

### Privatized Medicare Companies are Already Harming Seniors and People with Disabilities

We know from [studies](#) that privatized Medicare Advantage companies are doing a worse job serving beneficiaries than traditional Medicare. Companies offering privatized Medicare Advantage plans make it difficult for patients to get the care they need and for doctors to provide necessary care. For example, a report from the Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General found that privatized Medicare insurers were [denying](#) large numbers of Medicare enrollees medically necessary care. The U.S. Government Accountability Office found that patients with [significant care needs](#), including those in the [last year of their life](#), were more likely to drop their privatized Medicare Advantage plan and return to traditional Medicare. This indicates that these patients were unable to receive necessary care and wanted to return to traditional Medicare where their choice of provider and access to services are guaranteed.

### Privatized Medicare is a Waste of Taxpayer Dollars

Privatized Medicare companies take the extra money they make from delaying and denying care to beneficiaries and siphon it into excessive executive compensation and share buybacks and dividends. Just last year, these companies cost Medicare an excess of around [\\$82 billion](#). One study found that, since 2007, overpayments to private Medicare companies have added up to more than [\\$600 billion](#). If this trend continues, we could be overpaying insurance companies by more than [\\$1 trillion](#) over the next decade. Taxpayer dollars are better spent serving patients, instead of lining the coffers of greedy insurance corporations.

### Dr. Oz Has Proposed Putting Nearly Everyone on Privatized Medicare

Expanding privatized Medicare—which Dr. Oz has [proposed](#)—would mean huge corporate profits while patients continue to struggle to get the health care they need. The irony of moving toward a system where most or all Americans are served by privatized Medicare is that it would bring many of the dysfunctional aspects of our broken health care system into Medicare. Unlike other comparably wealthy nations, Americans would continue fall through the cracks. Under our current system, many are unable to afford the care they need and face financial hardship if they seek needed care. This contributes to the fact that Americans are [sicker than citizens of peer countries](#). Serving Americans through a different

fragmented system, privatized Medicare, would continue this undue spending without improving the nation's health outcomes. Americans would continue to face high levels of cost sharing, which contribute to many families struggling to get the care they need, with half [reporting](#) difficulty affording health care costs and 1 in 4 facing challenges paying for care. In addition, Americans who seek care risk [medical debt](#) and even bankruptcy.

Further privatizing Medicare would increase health care costs systemwide by adding further administrative bloat to our health care system. Our health care system is already made up of thousands of health insurance plans offered by numerous insurers as well as state and federal programs that all play some role in paying for health care. By spending health care resources on corporate profit or administrative waste, privatized Medicare would mean Americans pay even more for health care than they already do. We already [spend far more](#) than comparably wealthy countries, over \$12,500 per capita, compared with peer nations that are spending around half, per capita.

In addition, further expanding Medicare Advantage would [threaten the solvency](#) of many hospitals, particularly rural hospitals currently at risk of closure, as they would struggle to keep their doors open because they wouldn't have the consistent funding they need to serve their communities. Medicare Advantage plans regularly deny needed care, making it difficult for low-resource hospitals to remain open to serve the public.

#### **Dr. Oz Has Massive Conflicts of Interest, Including Investments in Privatized Medicare Insurers**

Dr. Oz has had a financial interest in promoting privatized Medicare. Based on disclosures from 2022, Dr. Oz owned between [\\$280,000 and \\$600,000](#) in shares in UnitedHealth Group, a major Medicare Advantage insurer, and [between \\$50,000 and \\$100,000](#) in shares of CVS Health.

In addition, Dr. Oz appears to have [violated marketing disclosure](#) requirements in promoting the supplement company, iHerb, on social media. Dr. Oz also previously publicly promoted [supplements](#) without [sufficient evidence](#) of their effectiveness.

#### **Instead of Privatized Medicare, We Need Medicare for All**

Instead of further privatizing Medicare, we should be moving toward a health care system that improves Medicare and expands it to everyone in the country, Medicare for All. Medicare for All would finally allow everyone in the United States to have guaranteed access to care throughout their lives. Families would finally be able to get the care they need when they need it. All medically necessary care would be covered, meaning Americans would no longer have to worry about not being able to afford the care they need. And by removing profit-seeking middlemen from the health care system, Medicare for All would finally bring down the cost of the U.S. health care system.

We will only be able to pass Medicare for All by continuing to build grassroots support and taking on entrenched health care interests. The people power on this issue continues to grow as Americans feel the pain of a health care system that is focused more on profit than it is on providing health care. While those who profit from the current system will put everything they have behind hindering reform, it is impossible to overcome the moral imperative that everyone in the U.S. deserves access to health care. The American people are only becoming more vocal in pushing for significant change in health care. So, the question is not whether we will achieve Medicare for All, but when. However, the appointment of

Dr. Oz to CMS Administrator threatens to take us backward and make health care even more difficult for Americans to access and afford. We must not go back.