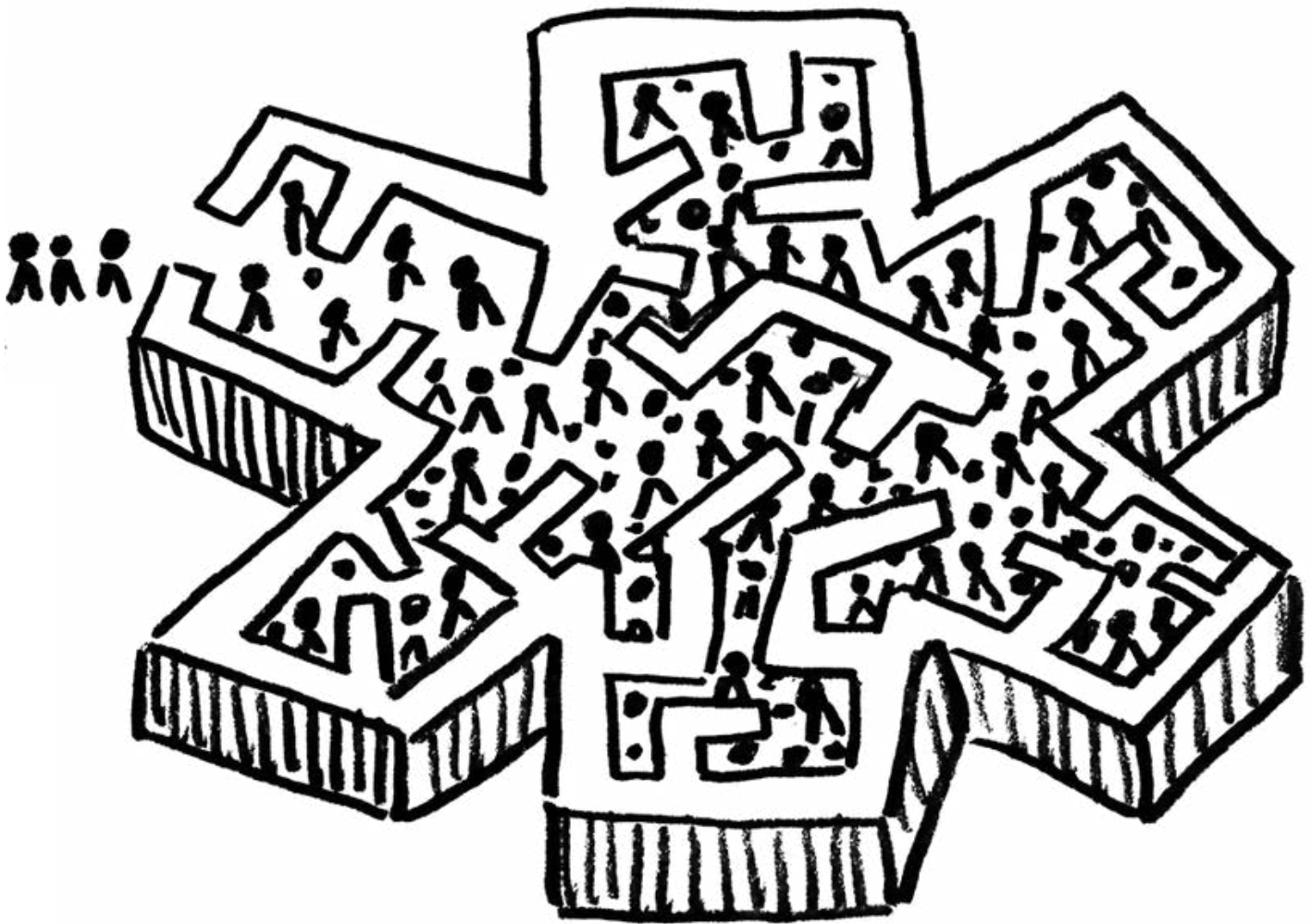


SKETCHES FROM OUTSIDE THE MARGINS

Stories of Healthcare in 2025



Cover artwork by Roy Frank (Eroyn Franklin)

ABOUT THE PROJECT

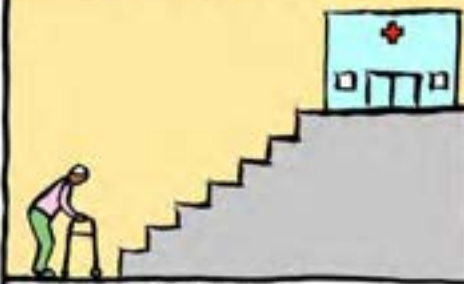
This comic series is the continuation of a project launched in 2016 by Seattle Center, Seattle Center Foundation, and Public Health – Seattle & King County. Together, we partnered with a team of comic artists to tell stories about the challenges that people face accessing healthcare.

The new comics commemorate ten years of Seattle/King County Clinic, a four-day event that provides free dental, vision, and medical care for people in need. We hope these stories spark conversations about what can be done to reduce barriers to healthcare and make the need for short-term events like Seattle/King County Clinic obsolete.

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PHYSICAL BARRIERS TO ACCESSING HEALTHCARE



INTERVIEW WITH
CHRISTINE LINDQUIST, MPH
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF
WASHINGTON HEALTHCARE
ACCESS ALLIANCE (WHAA)

THERE ARE MANY BARRIERS
TO PEOPLE ACCESSING THE
CARE THEY NEED



AND THE ONES WHO NEED
IT THE MOST HAVE IT THE
HARDEST.

THERE IS THE LACK OF
TRANSPORTATION-
PERSONAL, PUBLIC,
AND ACCOMODATING
MOBILITY DIFFICULTIES.



DISTANCE TO PROVIDERS IS
AN ISSUE. HEALTHCARE IS
NOT EVENLY DISTRIBUTED
THROUGH KING COUNTY OR
WASHINGTON STATE.



IMAGE SOURCE: WA STATE
GEOSPATIAL OPEN DATA PORTAL

DISTRIBUTION ALSO
CREATES A LACK OF TYPES
OF HEALTHCARE. WE HAVE
MULTIPLE COUNTY AREAS
WHERE THERE'S NOT A
SINGLE LICENSED
PSYCHOLOGIST.



THERE'S AN OPPORTUNITY
TO BRIDGE SOME OF
THESE GAPS WITH
TELEHEALTH



BUT PEOPLE IN RURAL
AREAS CAN ALSO LACK
INTERNET SERVICE.

EVEN IF YOU CAN GET
CARE FROM A FREE CLINIC,
THERE AREN'T ALWAYS
OPTIONS FOR FOLLOW-UP
CARE- SPECIALTY CARE,
LAB SERVICES, MEDICATION.



PEOPLE WHO ARE IN
POVERTY OR WHO DO SHIFT
WORK CAN'T TAKE TIME
OFF TO GET CARE. AND
THEY'RE MORE LIKELY TO
HAVE CHRONIC ILLNESS OR
GET INJURED ON THE JOB.



WE LOSE OUT ON SO MANY
PEOPLE WHO ARE ILL OR
INJURED, WHO COULD BE
MADE WHOLE IF WE HAD
A SYSTEM THAT TOOK
EVERYONE INTO ACCOUNT



BUT WE DON'T.

Gerrie got a letter from her insurance carrier informing her that from now on she needed to receive her prescriptions via mail order.



She was instructed to sign up online. Fortunately, Gerrie does have a computer.



The next step was calling her doctor's office and having her prescriptions officially transferred.



Gerrie is hard of hearing and talking on the phone is really frustrating for her.



When she set up her account online, she promptly forgot her password.



In order to retrieve it, the only option was 2-Step authentication, where they send a code to your cell phone, which Gerrie does not have.



In the same week, we learned another Bartell Drugs closed, leaving many people with less access to a place to pick up their meds in their neighborhood.



When I visited Gerrie, I sat on hold with her doctor's office while trying to update her password on her computer.





MY MEDICAL DEBT STORY

BY TATIANA GILL



I GOT SOBER IN 2009. THE STRESS MADE MY BAD ECZEMA FLARE TO A FULL-BODIED BLOODBATH, INCLUDING MY HAIR FALLING OUT.



MY INSURANCE COVERED UVB TREATMENT. I WENT A FEW TIMES A WEEK AND IT HELPED A LOT.

A FEW WEEKS INTO MY TREATMENT, MY EMPLOYER CHANGED INSURANCE POLICIES. I ASSUMED IT WAS COMPARABLE.



A FEW MONTHS LATER I REALIZED MY TREATMENTS WEREN'T BEING COVERED. MY BILL WAS FOR TENS OF THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS.

I WAS LAID OFF FROM MY JOB. THE MENTAL ILLNESS I HAD IN THE WAKE OF SOBRIETY WAS OVERWHELMING.



WHEN I DIDN'T PAY UP, THE MEDICAL CENTER SOLD MY BILL TO A DEBT COLLECTION AGENCY. THEY SENT ME A LETTER SAYING THEY WERE TAKING ME TO COURT.



TERRIFIED, I SET UP A PAYMENT PLAN FOR SMALL MONTHLY INSTALLMENTS - MOSTLY PAYING INTEREST. I WAS PERPETUALLY UNDEREMPLOYED WITH NO CREDIT.



I WAS IN A CONSTANT STATE OF PANIC OVER SEVERAL THINGS INCLUDING THIS DEBT.

I REACHED A CRISIS POINT INCLUDING SUICIDAL IDEATION. MY BOYFRIEND HELPED ME PAY OFF THE DEBT. OTHERWISE I MIGHT STILL BE PAYING IT.



THE DAY IT WAS PAID OFF, IT FELT LIKE WEIGHTS HAD BEEN TAKEN OUT OF MY SHOES!

IN RECENT YEARS, I'VE LEARNED THAT MEDICAL PROVIDERS SELL DEBTS LIKE MINE TO COLLECTION AGENCIES FOR PENNIES ON THE DOLLAR!



THAT WHOLE ORDEAL DIDN'T EVEN SUPPORT THE CLINIC THAT HEALED ME!

FROM UNDEMEDEICALDEBT.ORG:

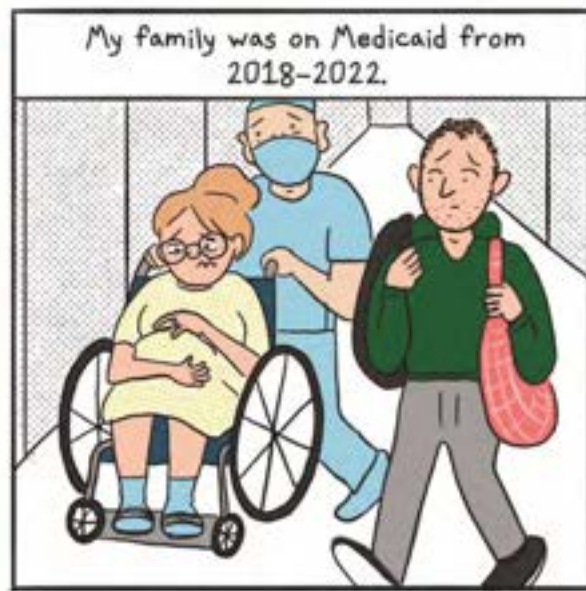
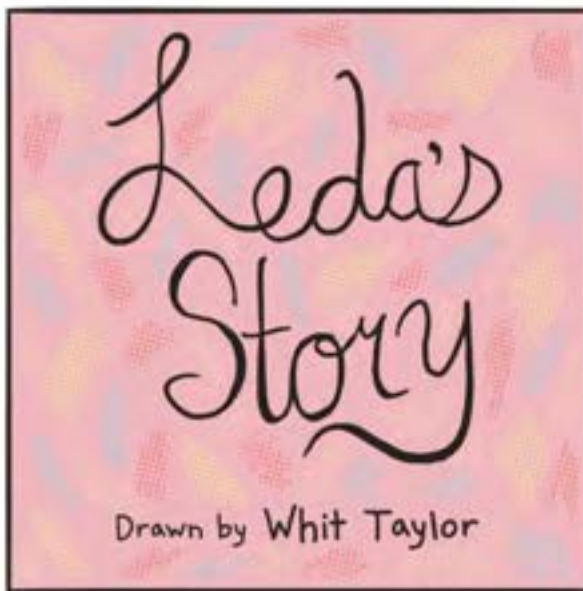
OVER 100 MILLION PEOPLE IN THE U.S. ARE STRUGGLING WITH MEDICAL DEBT, OWING AT LEAST \$200 BILLION COLLECTIVELY.

NEARLY 1/2 OF U.S. ADULTS STRUGGLE TO AFFORD HEALTHCARE COSTS.









I never sensed any judgement or felt like I was being treated differently at the doctor while on Medicaid. And I was always treated with dignity by the people at the Medicaid Office.



I had a lot of misconceptions about Medicaid initially!

I think we were the first people in our families to use such social welfare programs.

Neither of us came from wealth, and it very much felt like slipping down the ladder.



The more I talked to other parents, the more I realized that a bunch of us used Medicaid.



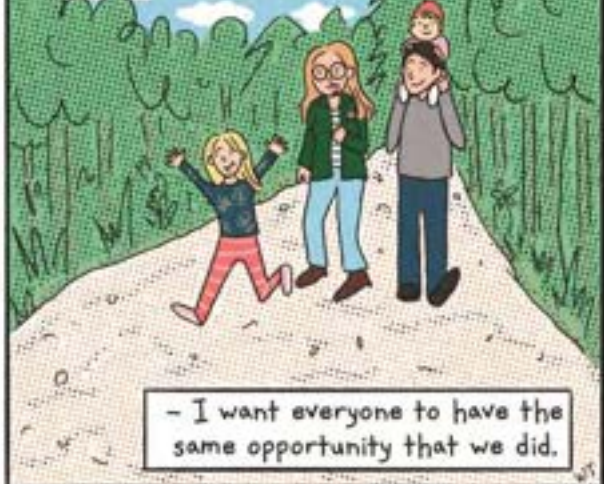
We got off of these programs one month before our second child was born, when my husband graduated school and started working as a lawyer.



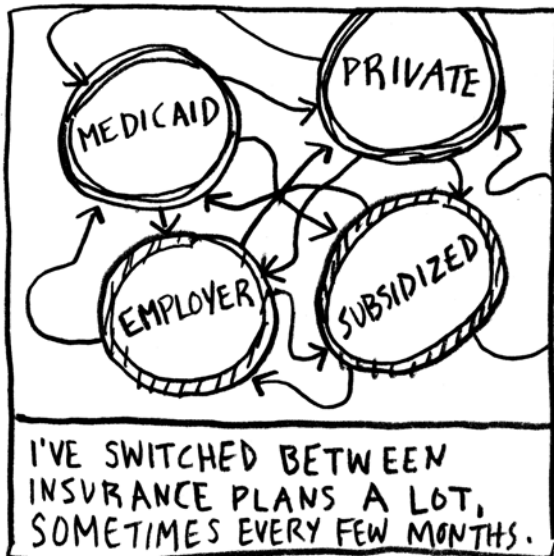
I'm so thankful Medicaid (and SNAP!) allowed my family to be where we are today.



I worry about other families who are currently in the same position we were in 2018-



- I want everyone to have the same opportunity that we did.



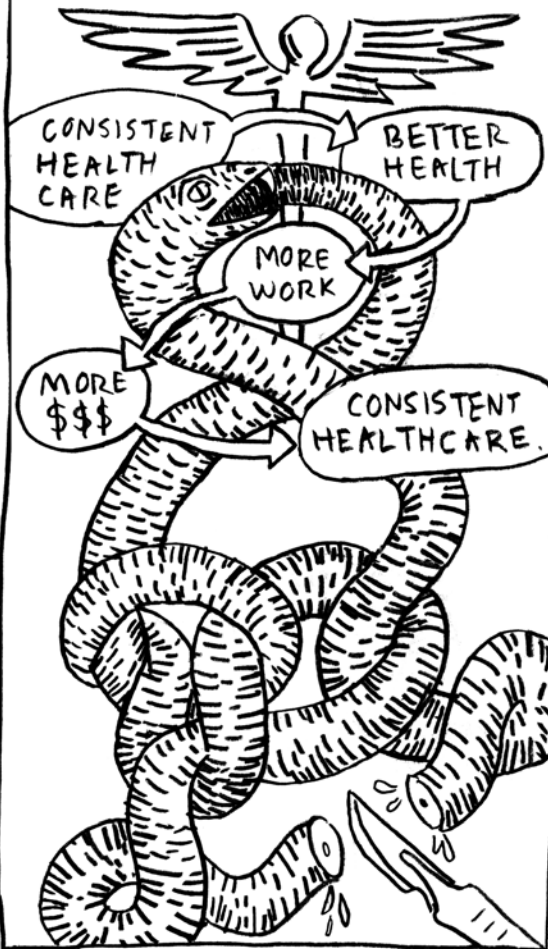
*HARD TO TELL FROM MY DRAWINGS BUT I'M A MIDDLEAGED ADULT.

THIS CAN BE ESPECIALLY HARD WITH CHRONIC CONDITIONS.



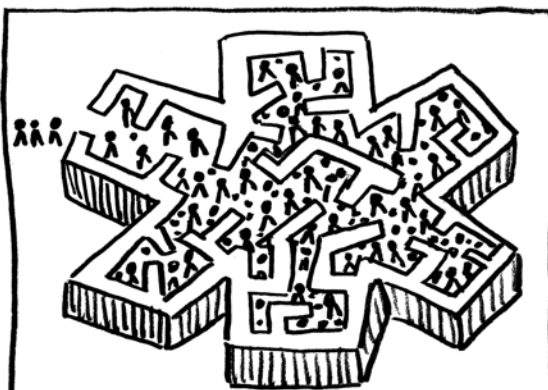
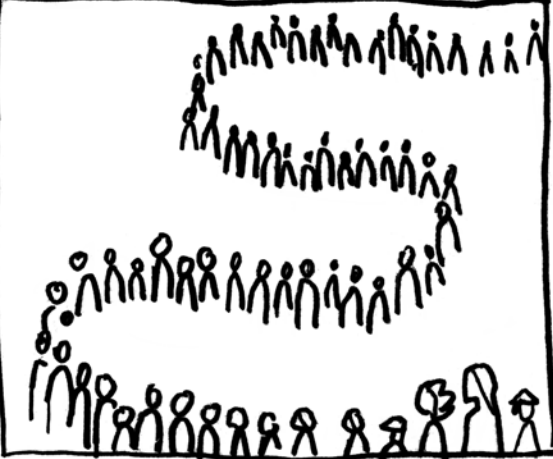
MY ALLERGIES TRIGGER HEALTH ISSUES THAT MAKE ME LOSE WORK. TREATMENT IS FIVE YEARS OF SHOTS.

A GAP IN THE REGIMEN MEANS I HAVE TO START OVER.



WHEN THE ENDS ARE REQUIRED FOR THE MEANS, FOLX LIKE ME CAN'T GET THE CARE WE NEED.

NAVIGATING INSURANCE INSECURITY IS THE NORM FOR MANY IN AMERICA...



IN A SYSTEM BUILT BY & FOR PEOPLE WHO WILL NEVER FACE SUCH DESTABILIZATION.







The healthcare system has become much more complicated to navigate.



I felt a sudden pain in my side ... it radiated up my body into my jaw. I wondered for a second if I was having a heart attack.



It subsided after 10 min.

The EKG test showed no issues with my heart, but I had another episode a few weeks later...



It was scarier because I was not at home.

Two large stones were detected, one almost filling the whole organ.



It happened again a few months later. I quickly took an aspirin and then waited it out. A friend online warned me not to ignore early signs.



I finally got a referral to a cardiologist and made the first available appointment in... 6 months!



Over the phone the Cardiologist said I'd have to go back to my PCP for the next steps of treatment.



I was the first person to check in at the walk-in clinic, yet everyone after me was seen before me and I had to wait 3 hours.



At the appointment, I described my symptoms and the cardiologist said,



He quickly scheduled me for an ultrasound.

A few days earlier I received a letter informing me my doctor quit and I'd have to start over with a new one.



Kelly Froh



Maria's Story

I started with a masters in public health, and worked for 20 years with local governments. But it was contract work with no benefits.



I needed a new career. Because I'm passionate about healthy communities and healthy living...



I became a real estate agent with a focus on healthy homes and helping clients buy a first home.



Health is important to me. But health insurance has not been easy. I've had to pay for things on my own.



With the WA State Exchange, the options are not spectacular. Mental health is not highlighted. I pay \$200/month that's not covered.



I'm divorced. So I'm on my own - and pay \$170.00 per month for health insurance. That's pretty steep!



\$170.00 per month, and the Exchange doesn't provide the same level of service as employer-provided insurance.



When I get my teeth filled, when I have a heart episode, it costs me more money.



Last year I went over the handlebars and broke 2 ribs.



My story is not unusual. To be in one's 40's or 50's, on a new path in life - with children or without, there will be GAPS in what's covered.



Unless one is in the tech or biomedical industries, there will be a gap in what's covered. Plus home prices are too high here.



I'm at the age where my peers are dying. We're in risk groups. **WE NEED TO BE ABLE TO TAKE CARE OF OURSELVES.**



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Roy Frank (Eroyn Franklin) is a cofounder and former Creative Director of Short Run Comix & Arts Festival. After working as an experiential designer at NBBJ and Interior Architects they created The Whatever Factory—a space for art education and experimentation in Rainer Beach, Seattle. eroynfranklin.com

Kelly Froh is a comic artist, art instructor, and co-founder and Executive Director of Short Run Comix & Arts Festival in Seattle. Her work can be found at cargocollective.com/kefroh and previously in *The Seattle Weekly*, *The Seattle Review of Books*, *Moss*, *The Women's Review of Books* and *Popula*.

Tatiana Gill is a Seattle-based cartoonist who uses her art to show strength and vulnerability, often on themes of mental health and diversity. Gill has created dozens of self-published comic books and contributes to publications across the world. tatianagill.com

David Lasky coauthored the graphic novel *The Carter Family: Don't Forget This Song*, which won the comics industry's Eisner Award. Among his best known work is the comic book, *No Ordinary Flu*, made in collaboration with Public Health – Seattle & King County.

Meredith Li-Vollmer works in communications for Public Health – Seattle & King County. Her experience with Seattle/King County Clinic inspired her to organize this project. Her comics projects have been published in *The New York Times*, *The Stranger*, *PEN America*, and *The American Journal of Public Health*. She is author of *Graphic Public Health: A Comics Anthology and Roadmap* which was recognized as Best of Graphic Medicine in 2022 by JAMA.

E.T. Russian is a multi-sensory artist, author, filmmaker and healthcare provider from Seattle. Russian is the author of *The Ring of Fire Anthology* and has published work in *The Stranger*, *The Seattle Weekly*, *Gay Genius* and *The Collective Tarot*. Russian is a member of cartooning collective THE HAND, an Advisory Board Member for Seattle's Short Run Comix & Arts Festival, a featured artist with Sins Invalid and dance company Light Motion, and Co-Director of the movie *Third Antenna*. etrussian.com

Whit Taylor is an award-winning cartoonist, editor, and health educator from New Jersey. Her comics have been published by *The New Yorker*, *The Nib*, and others. Taylor and Joyce Rice's public health history graphic novel, *The Greater Good*, will be published in 2026.

