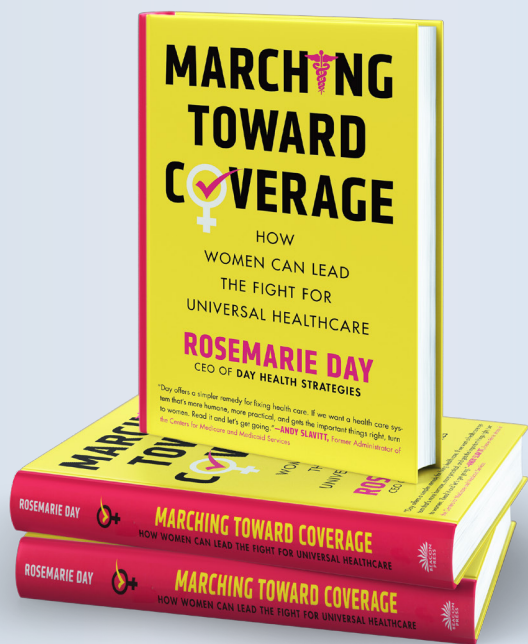


# BOOK SNAPS™

Zooming In On Your Next Read



## Marching Toward Coverage

By Rosemarie Day

Rosemarie Day is the founder and CEO of Day Health Strategies, which helps to implement national health reform. She's been working in healthcare and related fields for more than 25 years, including as the founding deputy director and chief operating officer of the Health Connector in Massachusetts, where she helped launch the award-winning organization that established the first state-run health insurance exchange in the state. She also served as the chief operating officer for the Massachusetts Medicaid program.

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## Leading the Fight for Universal Healthcare

Healthcare is a topic that's been heavy on the minds of many Americans and people worldwide as of late. It's not hard to see why. Between the COVID-19 pandemic and challenges to the Universal Care Act, the relationship between individuals and families and their access to healthcare has rarely been more fraught.

It's within this context that Rosemarie Day has released her book, *Marching Toward Coverage: How Women Can Lead the Fight for Universal Healthcare*. Rosemarie Day is a pioneering reformer in the field of healthcare, having spent her career in various positions in the healthcare industry from small startups to major organizations and even some time in the government sector.

But Day's most visible work has been as the founder and CEO of Day Health Strategies, focused mainly on helping move forward the work of nationwide health reform. In addition to their pioneering work in health reform, Day Health Strategies now also works with organizations looking to change the way they approach healthcare. Along the way, Day has become a widely respected expert on healthcare, health reform, and other related fields.

That brings us to *Marching Toward Coverage*. While an uninformed glance at the subtitle might leave certain audiences wondering why healthcare should be a gendered issue—after all, men are subject to the same healthcare system that women are, flaws and all—a deeper look reveals that the need for healthcare reform is more gendered than it might immediately appear.

For starters, the vast majority of healthcare decisions are made by women. Women make 80% of healthcare related decisions for themselves and their families. As a result, it's largely women who are interacting with the complexity and shortcomings of the American healthcare system.

To Day, the lack of access to affordable, manageable healthcare is nothing short of a national emergency. She believes that a growing swell of activism led not by politicians but by everyday women can inspire those leaders to take action and change the course of healthcare for the better.



In that way, this book isn't just a critical analysis of the current state of healthcare—it's a field guide for women filled with actionable information about how they can improve the state of healthcare in a very real way. In fact, the book is perhaps most effective as a tool for taking incredibly complex concepts—the Affordable Care Act, how preexisting conditions are managed by providers, employer-sponsored plans, etc.—and communicating them in a way that makes them more accessible to the layperson. After all, a citizen can't take informed action until they're informed.

Any fears that *Marching Towards Coverage* might waste its pages on idyllic dreaming of a healthcare utopia are quickly assuaged—Day's approach is a pragmatic one. While she isn't shy to assert that healthcare is a fundamental human right, she gets right down to the business of assessing exactly how that right can be secured through tangible actions today.

## Marching Toward Coverage Amidst COVID and ACA Challenges

It's worth noting that the world in which *Marching Toward Coverage* was released is a very different one from the world in which it was initially drafted. While we can't say for sure exactly when the bulk of the writing of Day's book took place, its release occurred just as the COVID-19 pandemic exploded around the globe and the book mentions that much of it was written in 2019.

So, while the book doesn't address COVID-19 directly, the global landscape has made Day's writing even more intensely relevant than she ever could have anticipated. While Day may have been tempted to delay her book release and add content to the book that addressed the pandemic, it's hard to imagine how the original version as it stands could be more timely.

More than anything, the virus has laid bare many of the challenges and shortcomings of the American healthcare system. Hospitals have quickly become understaffed and overfilled, with many state and local leaders saying they're on the brink of having to turn away some patients.

Meanwhile, people who are contracting the virus are avoiding getting care in some cases because they're worried that they won't be able to afford their bills. Horror stories of six-figure bills after a COVID-19 related hospital stay have circulated widely—adding to the countless stories of debilitating hospital bills that have long been a staple of our current healthcare system.

Rosemarie Day's message has become timely in another way. Just as activists like her are urging the need for further healthcare reforms, the only major bit of healthcare reform of the 21st century—the Affordable Care Act—is under attack.

## Combining Knowledge and Activism

In the book's preface, Day outlines the intended dual purpose of the book—to inform readers with the necessary knowledge to understand the health care system, then to empower them to act on that knowledge for the betterment of the nation and the world.

"I wrote this book... by bringing together two key components: knowledge and activism," she writes in the preface. "I know that life is terribly busy and you may not be able to read the entire book. That's OK! Read some now, save some for later. Some parts may be more important to you now than others. I hope the book, taken as a whole, informs and inspires you."

This excerpt serves as a representation of Day's overall approach to activism—that it doesn't have to be an all-or-nothing dive into full-time revolution. Day believes that a wide spectrum of everyday people—in this case, women—making marginal increases in their level of knowledge activism can lead to real and necessary change overtime. She recognizes that change won't happen overnight, and she both believes and encourages her readers to believe that that's okay

It's telling that she ends her preface with a quote from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. about the long path of reform: "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice."

Day partners this quote with words of her own: "But the arc won't bend by itself. Together, we have the power to make change if we join forces and act. Please join me as we keep marching towards coverage."

## Where Women Fit in the Fight for Universal Healthcare

"In addition to our challenges as caregivers," Day writes, "women are more vulnerable to gaps in the employer-sponsored insurance system and cutbacks in Medicaid." Details like these explain why women are so deeply affected by issues relating to healthcare. But what makes them uniquely suited to battle for it as a cause? Day covers that, too.

"Women have proven themselves capable of strong and persistent activism on health (and many other) issues, locally and nationally. We have built awareness and overcome obstacles, both personal and systemic. We now need to bring it all together, holistically and impactfully, with a movement for universal healthcare.

## Different Nations, Different Paths to Universal Coverage

Throughout the book, Rosemarie Day asks readers to confront some truths about America that may make pro-America stalwarts cringe. Nowhere is this more true than when she spends a chapter directly comparing American healthcare to other developed nations, a comparison where the U.S. falls well short.

"Our population health outcomes are much worse than those of countries that have universal healthcare, despite the tremendous amount we spend. In fact, our infant mortality and life expectancy rates are similar to those of much poorer nations. American women are much more likely to die in pregnancy and childbirth than they are in any other wealthy country (with black women three to four times more likely to die than white women), and the rate is getting worse. American women have higher rates of emotional distress and are the least likely to give



## Day’s message isn’t that American healthcare is a hopeless mess—it’s that we can learn and improve by following the examples of other developed nations.

a high rating to the quality of their healthcare, compared to women in other wealthy countries. And almost half of American women have problems with their medical bills.”

While this passage paints a bleak picture, Day’s message isn’t that American healthcare is a hopeless mess—it’s that we can learn and improve by following the examples of other developed nations.

Day by no means paints these other nations as shining beacons of healthcare perfection, and she does recognize that there is more than one path to universal healthcare, but looking at these examples provides insights into how America might improve its standing when it comes to healthcare quality, access, and affordability for its citizens.

In this section, Day dives deep on the numbers and figures—a section where she may lose less statistics-inclined readers. That said, the data she uses does paint a compelling picture, and it plays strongly into her stated purpose of educating readers before they can be informed activists.

The charts, graphs, and figures Day includes help to visually convey her message, and she does an admirable job of keeping the data focused on its human cost rather than getting lost in the weeds of in-depth analysis.

Along the way, Day excels by never losing sight of the context. It’s easy to trot out graphs and charts that show a narrative, but communicating what that data means and especially what it means for everyday Americans is a bigger and more important challenge.

Day also outlines specific measures that other countries use to improve the healthcare of their citizens, including extended parental leave, subsidized education, unemployment assistance, and more.

Crucially, Day doesn’t stop at outlining the ways other countries are outpacing the U.S.—she details a path to help us catch up. “If our ultimate goal is to improve health,” she says, “then universal coverage is not enough. It’s more important to look at the countries that are doing better than we are and learn from them. We can also look at successful programs in the U.S. and expand them.” She goes on to detail successes in both the U.S. and other countries in areas such as earned income tax credits, food stamps, education, and others.

### Conclusion

Overall, this book isn’t just a feminist manifesto, a searing criticism of American healthcare, or a political call to action—it’s

all of these things and more. Most importantly, it’s an educational resource. Complicated topics obscure the truth about how to improve one of America’s ‘most dysfunctional and confusing industries,’ locking the power for change in the hands of a select few people in power who often benefit from maintaining the status quo.

It’s in this dual role as both an educator and a revolutionary leader that Rosemarie Day truly shines. There’s plenty of hard data, but there’s also much more than that. There’s lots of inspiration and motivational language, too, but Day makes sure to go beyond inspiration to pragmatism. She covers the Who, What, Where, When, & Why in equal measure, and does so in a way that’s both in-depth enough to represent the complexity of the problem and straightforward enough for the average reader to understand.

After all, as Day testifies throughout the book, one of the greatest barriers to healthcare reform is knowledge. We can’t take action to confront the problem until we know how the system works, where it fails, and how to correct it.

By looking at small successful programs within the U.S., nationwide successes in other developed countries, and a series of research and experiences from Day’s own long career in healthcare, this book presents a complete picture of the state and future of healthcare as it should be—accessible, understood, and affordable for all.

While those who are already deep in the fight for healthcare reform may not find any particularly striking new insights, *Marching Toward Coverage* is a compelling and effective look at potential paths to reform that the average American (woman or otherwise) can get behind. That makes it a book well worth celebrating.