

Today I'd like to explain my condition and how corporate greed has personally forced me to endanger my life. My name is Lena Chin. I am a Hudson Valley Artist and SUNY New Paltz graduate. I was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes at 8 years old. Type 1 diabetes is misunderstood by many but I would say that it is an autoimmune disorder that caused my antibodies to attack my pancreas and obliterated a god given function that every single person in the world otherwise possesses: the ability to break down food with the hormone insulin. Insulin was created by Sir Fredrick Banting in 1923. Banting could have sold his patent handsomely but instead sold it to the university of Toronto for a dollar. Instead he received a Nobel prize because his discovery meant a life saving drug could be widely available to the world.

In 2016, I was left without insurance due to my father's company going on strike even though I have a chronic illness I was not allowed to be kept on. In order to get insulin I needed my doctor to give me the most they were allowed to give and hope for the best until my father's company came off strike. It took 3 months. I was unable to feel comfortable taking insulin or using supplies to manage my diabetes without worrying that I would need it for more dire situations. So I would keep sites in longer than the recommended 2-3 days, I would reuse reservoirs and scrounge for old vials of insulin because it was something. It was something to keep me alive but it wasn't best for my body. I ate mostly vegetables and stayed away from sugar and starches hoping that they wouldn't create high blood sugars because I couldn't afford to use more insulin until I was able to get back on my insurance. I fear the same may happen again without Medicare for all. Insulin which is a gift of life given to me and many others by Sir Fredrick Banting. He kept me in mind without ever having the faintest idea about me or who I am. His generosity and tireless efforts in the 1920s makes it possible for me to not fear day to day whether I'm allowed to live because insulin is a gift to keep type 1 diabetes a chronic illness and not a terminal one. But by having the complex system of insurance and the inability to educate the masses about what is allotted under each individual plan it has caused a lot of confusion and possible death to those who are unable to qualify for these programs.

Luckily, by the end of 2016, I was able to be back on my father's insurance but that time frame is running out. By my 26th birthday I will be kicked off my father insurance again. At the age of 22, I was hospitalized 3 separate times. If no one is privy to how serious my condition is I went into diabetic ketoacidosis or DKA which happens when the body is resistant to or has a shortage of insulin for a prolonged span of time, it can also be caused by infection. The symptoms are the closest thing to death I have ever personally experienced. I ran a fever of 105 degrees, I was constantly vomiting and I felt my body go numb. With my body burning up and the functions of my body such as vision dissipating I thought it was over. This was no average flu type symptoms. I could feel every ounce of myself shutting down with my mother and sister screaming to stay awake. If this were to happen without insurance I can assure you that I could die. It is common that anything that isn't labeled as terminal is considered not critical. But it would only take 2 days in that state if not less for my body to break down and for someone who has similar afflictions as me to be in critical condition or worse. Insulin prices are astronomical while insulin should be accessible because of its low cost of production.

This need to be in capitalistic control of the healthcare system and to divide who is entitled to it and who is not goes against humanity. It tells people that some are better and some are not worth enough. Now tell me how can anyone judge that by someone's fiscal standing? Insulin is an act of humanity and I believe that with Medicare for all we can show everyone with my illness and so many others that we are human beings and should treat each other as if that is our goal. To be human is the goal of healthcare and until our systems realign themselves to having that be a priority, many of us will fight to help one another survive. If you want to help be human then vote on Medicare for all.