

IN THE NEWS

News for LTC Professionals
in 100 Words-or-Less

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THEY SAID IT:

"Everyone is talking about the silver tsunami, but no one seems to be talking about the coming SNF closure tsunami" Melissa Brown, COO at Gravity Healthcare Consulting

"The individuals behind these scandals will be held accountable but it is also apparent we need to provide additional tools to go after bad actors who take advantage of those in need" AZ Gov. Katie Hobbs in the State of the State address calling for more oversight on nursing homes that abuse residents

"Long-term care is one of the sectors that has actually experienced a net employment decrease since the pandemic" Karen Shen, PhD, of Johns Hopkins University

"As demand for [long-term care] continues to grow, the challenge of attracting and retaining healthcare managers will only be more imperative" from a study by Texas State University on administrator turnover

If Doc Sees 'em Early On Hospital Won't Get 'em Back

Nursing home residents who see a doctor soon after admission have a lower chance of returning to the hospital regardless of prognosis.

A University of Pennsylvania study found that patients seen by a physician or other advanced practice provider within a day of a skilled nursing admission were less likely to be re-hospitalized compared to residents seen two days post-admission or later.

But Nursing homes don't necessarily prioritize visits for sicker patients, largely because of policy and reimbursement issues that limit the presence of physicians in many facilities.

JAMDA, 01/30/2024

Administrator Turnover Affects Bottom Line & Care

High nursing home administrator turnover is linked to lower operating margins.

A Texas State University study found that compared to facilities with no turnover, facilities with one administrator turnover saw a year-over-year 1.14% decrease in margins. Facilities with two or more turnovers saw a 2.25% decrease.

The researchers noted that turnover rate for administrators has been consistent at about 40% since the 90s.

this is the first recent study to show how turnover directly affects facilities' finances. Previous studies have linked high administrator turnover with lower quality care.

Risk Management and Healthcare Policy, 02/01/2024

Agencies Fined for Gouging – LTC Facilities Get Refunds

Three staffing agencies accused of collectively price gouging LTC providers will pay more than \$260,000 in fines and refunds to resolve allegations of wrongdoing.

Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Joy Campbell said the chief complaint was that the accused companies charged nursing home and assisted living facility rates that were higher than the maximums allowed by the state, including mischaracterization of COVID-influenced rates.

Some of the violations included charging higher rates during inclement weather or according to COVID cases in the facility; claiming maximum rates were suspended due to COVID-19; and attempting to improperly classify employees as travel nurses.

Senior Living, 01/30/2024

Healthcare Leads the Pack in Sign-on Bonuses

Job search company [Adzuna](#) examined 8 million U.S. jobs advertised on its job search engine which revealed nursing and healthcare [lead](#) in signing bonuses.

Nearly 18% of job postings in the sector advertised bonuses.

Within healthcare and nursing, the amounts vary depending on the individual's title.

Physicians led with average signing bonuses of \$47,993 followed by Directors of Nursing (\$17,216); PTs (\$12,350); RNs (\$11,143); Occupational therapist (\$7,188) and CNAs (\$3,912).

Becker's Hospital Review, 01/26/2024

Medicaid Suspensions Loom For Two NJ Nursing Homes

New Jersey is suspending Medicaid payments for 120 days to two nursing homes citing the facilities' poor condition and concerns over potential fraud.

The suspensions are to take effect May 24 for Deptford Center for Rehabilitation and Healthcare and the Hammonton Center for Rehabilitation and Healthcare, and related entities, according to the Office of the State Comptroller.

The owners - Kenneth Rozenberg, Beth Rozenberg and Daryl Hagler - are accused of diverting \$83 million in Medicare and Medicaid payments from nursing homes in New York.

Both 240-bed centers have one-star ratings.

Cherry Hill Courier-Post, 01/29/2024

Staffing Requirements Climb Providers Seek More Pay

The Pennsylvania Health Care Association is asking the legislature to adopt its proposed Enhancing Care With Incentivized Payments program. The first-year cost would be \$100 million.

It's not a handout. The funding would be available only to those who meet or exceed established goals on four key metrics: Percentage of long-stay residents experiencing falls with major injury; residents with pressure ulcers; residents with worsening ADL; and total staff turnover.

The program would start July 1, the same date the state is increasing the CNA ratios and raising the PPD rate from 2.7 to 3.2.

McKnight's, 01/30/2024

IN THE TRENCHES – COVID-19 in the States, the SNFs, the World

CALIFORNIA: Using an artificial intelligence system they developed, a bioengineering team from UCLA scanned the entire collection of proteins produced by SARS-CoV-2 and then performed an exhaustive series of validation experiments. The scientists found that certain viral protein fragments, generated after the SARS-CoV-2 virus is broken down into pieces, can mimic a key component of the body's machinery for amplifying immune signals. Their discoveries suggest that some of the most serious COVID-19 outcomes can result from these fragments overstimulating the immune system, thereby causing rampant inflammation (*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*).

THE WORLD: A recent study revealed lasting brain issues from COVID sufferers. Neurological evaluations revealed that cognition scores were significantly lower in people who had had COVID-19 compared to controls across five measured classifications with cases displaying encephalopathy scoring the lowest. Cognitive accuracy and response times were substantially lower than baseline expectations, irrespective of SARS-CoV-2 infection severity (*Research Square*).

VERMONT: The Secretary of State announced Walgreens has agreed to pay a \$275,000 fine to settle allegations that some of its Vermont stores temporarily closed without notice, had untenable working conditions for pharmacists and made medication and vaccination errors during the coronavirus pandemic. Secretary of State Sarah Copeland Hanzas called it a “big win for Vermont consumers.” (*AP*).

AMERICA: Antiviral medications such as Paxlovid were hailed by health officials as an important way to reduce the risk of severe COVID-19 illness or death. Yet the drugs have remained underused. Scientists in Boston investigated. Their new findings suggest that some vulnerable patients were not offered the prescription medicines at all, and that doctors need more education to make sure the drugs get to patients who could benefit (*Los Angeles Times*).

THE WORLD: In a survey *nirmatrelvir-ritonavir* (*Paxlovid*) did not reduce the odds of developing long COVID in vaccinated, non-hospitalized adults. About 16% of those treated with the drug during acute infection with SARS-CoV-2 self-reported long COVID symptoms that persisted for 3 months or longer after infection, compared with 14% of those who were not treated with the medication (*Journal of Medical Virology*).

CALIFORNIA: Full-term babies of mothers infected with COVID-19 during pregnancy had triple the risk of experiencing respiratory distress (RD) compared to those who weren't exposed to the virus before they were born. Researchers from the University of California Los Angeles also found that the risk of RD in babies was lower in mothers who had received at least one COVID vaccine dose. The study included 221 pregnant women with COVID and 227 exposed babies from the UCLA Medical Center system (*CIDRAP*).

MASSACHUSETTS: In a study of 31 patients who had immune suppression deemed to be not severe, the researchers found that “While our sample size is limited, these results provide reassurance that most patients with mild/moderate immunosuppression (including those on B-cell depleting therapy) will be able to clear the virus during the acute phase of infection” (*Mass General Brigham news release*).

THE WORLD: Immunocompromised patients with persistent viruses have been considered a possible source of mutated variants. Researchers assessed 150 immunocompromised patients with COVID-19 from five US healthcare systems in 2022. team found that only 25% of patients tested positive on PCR tests for 21 days or longer after onset of illness, and only 8% tested positive for live virus for 21 days or longer (*The Lancet Microbe*).

SAN FRANCISCO: In first results from a study that tracked neurodevelopmental differences in babies born to mothers who were vaccinated against COVID-19, researchers from the University of

California, San Francisco found no differences at the 12- and 18-month marks compared to babies born to unvaccinated moms. the researchers said their goal was to address unanswered questions about the longer-term impacts of COVID vaccination on developmental outcomes (*JAMA Pediatrics*).

THE WORLD: COVID vaccines saved nearly 20 million lives worldwide, by one estimate, and generated billions of dollars for several drugmakers. But investment in experimental vaccines for dozens of other diseases remains modest. drugmakers developing new vaccines for infectious diseases received only 3.4% of all venture capital raised for biopharma companies in the past 10. By comparison firms with potential cancer fighting drugs received 38% (*Boston Globe*).

THE WORLD: Pfizer reported a surprise quarterly profit helped by cost cuts and higher-than-expected demand for its COVID treatment Paxlovid. Investors fled Pfizer last year as pandemic worries declined and billions of dollars in COVID-19 vaccine and treatment sales disappeared. The company has responded with a recent purchase of cancer drugmaker Seagen and a \$4 billion internal cost-cutting program (*Reuters*).

MONTANA: Scientists at the Rocky Mountain Laboratories in Montana put an COVID infected hamster near other hamsters then manipulated the climate from cold and dry to hot and humid mimicking weather conditions in many parts of the world. The other hamsters got sick regardless of conditions. The scientists deduced that at least at this stage – COVID is not a seasonal phenomenon (*Science News*).

COVID-19, 02/02/2024

Global Cases – Deaths
774,395,593– 7,023,271

U.S. Hospitalizations – Deaths
6, 771,932 – 1,174,626

U.S % Positive Tests Last Week
6.3% Down 4.6%

A Study??? They Could Have Just Asked Us About It

The healthcare sector is experiencing increased worker turnover in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic even as employment rates have steadied in many areas of the industry.

A study by Johns Hopkins University found that quarterly staff exit rates across healthcare were 7.7% by the end of 2021 — a full 30% higher than the baseline 2018 rate.

The findings suggest that even if care providers are able to match the higher exit rates with better recruiting strategies, there are still additional costs created by staff churn.

McKnight's, 01/29/2024

Immunity Does Not Apply in COVID Wrongful Death Claim

After resident Clara Troilo died of COVID-19 at Rose Tree Place in Media, PA in April 2020, her estate filed suit against operator Watermark Retirement Communities and two executives.

The suit alleged the community did not notify residents of COVID-19 in the community and attempted to “conceal, hide, mask and cover-up” its presence.

The lawsuit contends the community administered countermeasures in the form of COVID-19 tests and then misrepresented the results of those tests to families.

The facility argued it was a federal case under the PREP act. A federal appeals court disagreed, sending the case back to state court.

Senior Living, 01/12/2024

NJ Wants to Rebuild Nursing Workforce

New Jersey is hoping to rebuild its workforce of nurses due to high turnover.

The 2024 edition of the annual *Nursing Data and Analysis* report points out that the state turnover rate is higher than the national average. At the same time, 3% to 6% of New Jersey's nurses will retire in the next two years.

Officials say a link vital to rebuilding the nursing workforce is to remove advanced practice nurse restrictions.

Officials also want a re-evaluation of team-based approaches, technology for telehealth solutions utilized, encourage, retired nurses back into the workforce, and outdated healthcare policies revisited.

McKnight's Clinical Daily News, 01/12/2024

Nursing Home Beds to Close - Residential Care to Open

The new owners of Seaport Village in Ellsworth, Maine are looking to convert the 91-bed facility (61 SNF and 30 AL) into a residential care facility.

Documents filed at the county's registry of deeds indicate Bella Point Ellsworth LLC has secured a loan of \$10.2 million from a Utah-based financial lender to purchase the nursing home.

The change in ownership follows a period of financial difficulties for the nursing home, which in 2020 had a lien placed upon it by the city for failure to pay \$100,000 in back taxes. Those taxes were paid off in 2021.

Bangor Daily News, 01/03/2024

Study: Burnout Not Harming Resident Care

With care worker weariness impossible to ignore in the long-term care sector, researchers have increasingly tried to learn whether burnout has led to lower care quality in nursing homes.

A new study has found no link between worker burnout and several common negative patient outcomes, including use of antipsychotics without indication, depressive symptoms and responsive behaviors.

Burnout and these negative outcomes were both common in the approximately 90 nursing homes studied, but struggling care workers still had confidence in their abilities and were able to provide competent care in these areas.

Medical Care Research and Review, 12/30/2024

ONE COLUMN

CMS Rule Targeting PE and REIT Ownership Now in Effect

A new CMS rule will significantly expand disclosure requirements for skilled nursing facilities participating in Medicare and Medicaid with respect to direct and indirect ownership, oversight, managerial, and other information to increase transparency.

The new rule implements portions of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, which was signed into law in March 2010 under the Obama administration because some believe nursing home care diminishes under ownership by private equity companies and real estate investment trusts.

CMS has noted that the transparency requirements aim to empower families and other stakeholders to closely examine the correlation between the ownership of a Nursing Facility and the quality of care at such facility in order to make better-informed decisions about nursing home care.

While Nursing Facilities have been historically required to disclose ownership structures and certain managing parties, the Final Rule enhances disclosure obligations to include several layers within the upward chain of ownership, the ownership of related parties with which a Nursing Facility has commercial or financial arrangements, and certain parties with administrative, management, or policy-related functions.

Specifically, in addition to previous disclosure obligations, Nursing Facilities will now be required to disclose each of the following:

Each member of the facility's governing body, including each member's name, title, and period of service at the facility; Each person or entity that is an officer, director, member, partner, trustee, or managing employee of the facility, including such party's name, title, and period of service; Each person or entity that is an “additional disclosable party” with respect to the facility; and Each additional disclosable party's organizational structure, including the relationship of each such party to the facility and to each other.

Morgan Lewis, 01/30/2024

Esformes Has a Plea Deal Details to Come

Philip Esformes, the disgraced nursing home and assisted living community owner charged in a record \$1.3 billion healthcare fraud case in 2016, has reached a plea deal with prosecutors on outstanding charges against him.

Former President Donald Trump commuted Esformes' 20-year prison sentence in December 2020 but left intact the remaining parts of his sentence, including the payment of \$5.5 million in restitution and the forfeiture of \$38.7 million equivalent to property traced back to Esformes' money laundering offenses.

A change of plea and sentencing hearing now will be scheduled. Further details were not immediately available.

McKnight's, 02/02/2024

Omnicare Notified Workers Of Layoffs This Week

Long-term care pharmacy Omnicare announced layoffs this week as a result of a review of operations "and other market dynamics."

Information on the number of individuals who will be affected and their locations was not disclosed.

However, last August CVS Health, which owns Omnicare, said it would be laying off 5,000 total employees – a move expected to generate about \$600 million in savings in 2024.

CVS is seeking to sell Omnicare, which it acquired in 2015 for \$10.4 billion plus the assumption of \$2.3 billion in Omnicare debt.

Senior Living, 01/31/2024

Maine's Veterans Homes In Pretty Bad Shape

Long-term care for Maine's veterans is on the verge of collapse.

That's the message veterans' advocates told U.S. Senator Angus King at a Senate Veterans Affairs Committee hearing in Augusta.

Sharon Fusco, CEO of the Maine Veterans' Home System, testified that her budget fell short by 14 million dollars last year.

Fusco said Medicaid, Medicare and VA reimbursement rates don't cover the cost of care, and she said collaborations that focus on transportation, food insecurity and social isolation of veterans are all underfunded, as well.

The VA is currently working on a multi-year expansion of home care for veterans.

Sen Angus King news release, 01/28/2024

Flooding and Asbestos San Diego SNF Evacuated

Flood damage has forced the evacuation of Golden Hill Post Acute Care, a 99-bed, 4 Star SNF in San Diego,

Workers loaded patients in wheelchairs and on gurneys into medical transport vans, gradually emptying the building and driving them to other nursing homes so that repairs can be made.

Several people who asked to remain anonymous said asbestos was detected at Golden Hill, indicating that the presence of the potentially harmful substances played a roll in the need to evacuate.

San Diego Union-Tribune, 01/25/2024

Half the Existing SNFs Could Be History by '34

The number of skilled nursing facilities certified by CMS peaked in 2017 but declined by 4% overall between 2015 and 2023 — a net loss of nearly 650 facilities. Meanwhile, the total number of nursing home residents dropped even more – 12%, during the same period.

Further, the average number of nurse hours PPD also has dropped.

Melissa Brown, COO of Gravity Healthcare Consulting sees it as a troubling trend.

"I believe that if major changes are not implemented now, we will see closures of at least 25% to 50% of the current nursing homes in the next five to 10 years."

McKnight's, 01/08/2024

Briefly IN THE NEWS

The FDA reported there have been 561 deaths reported since 2021 related to the use of Philips' ventilators and machines for treating obstructive sleep apnea. The health regulator added that in 2023, between July and September, it received more than 7,000 medical device reports, including 111 reports of deaths related to the use of these machines. Philips said it would not sell new devices to treat sleep apnea in the U.S. in the coming years (Reuters)

Gibbins Advisors reported healthcare company bankruptcies soared in 2023 to their highest level in the last five years. The advisory firm's report, which looked at Chapter 11 bankruptcy case filings from 2019 to 2023, found 79 healthcare companies with more than \$10 million in liabilities filed for bankruptcy protection last year. Pharmaceutical and senior care companies made up nearly half of the list. The next-highest year for bankruptcies was 2019, when 51 companies filed (*Modern Healthcare*).

Older adults receive healthcare outside of their homes an average of three weeks a year. A study of 6,619 adults 65+ found that on average older adults spent 20.7 days traveling away from their homes to receive healthcare; 17.3% of those days were for office and similar visits., Further, 11% spent 50 or more days each year receiving healthcare services outside their homes (*Annals of Internal Medicine*).

A bill that would legalize assisted suicide in Minnesota may have the momentum to pass this upcoming session. The bill was heard and debated on Thursday by the health committee, and it would make the assisted suicide option available only for patients 18 and over who are mentally fit, and terminally ill with a prognosis of six months to live or less. The bill's sponsor, Democratic Rep. Mike Freiberg, said he's confident the bill has the votes to pass in the legislature (*CBS News*).

The U.S. syphilis cases rose 9% in 2022, but cases of gonorrhea fell 9%. The CDC says it's not clear why. Total syphilis, cases surpassed 207,000 in 2022, the highest count in the U.S. since 1950 (*MedPage Today*).