

## Cordt Kassner

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December 2nd, 2023

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## Headlines

### [News about the Upcoming Hospice News Today Transition](#)

Two long-time hospice advocates and entrepreneurs will be assuming publication of *Hospice News Today* on January 1, 2024, which will be renamed *Hospice and Palliative Care Today, LLC*.

Leading the effort will be Cordt Kassner, PhD, who, as many of you know, is the brains and number-cruncher behind Hospice Analytics. Cordt will be bringing on an editor, who is well known in the hospice community. We'll be announcing that name in a week or two.

Cordt and his editor are committed to maintaining—and building upon—the *Hospice News Today* goal of ensuring that hospice leaders have the information and background necessary to navigate the ever-changing, ever-challenging healthcare landscape to ensure the long-term sustainability and success of the hospice model of care.

They will be making some exciting changes in the newsletter format as they roll out *Hospice and Palliative Care Today*. You'll still receive a daily email. Monday through Friday the email will digest the day's news. Weekend and Holiday editions will present some deeper looks at areas like clinical news.

You'll soon be able to customize your daily newsletter to the topics and issues of interest to you—although given my personal interest in issues management, I encourage you to cast as broad a net as you're comfortable.

The newsletter will be dynamically linked to an incredibly interactive website where you can manage your profile, search archives, and more.

And, perhaps most significantly, *Hospice and Palliative Care Today* will convert to a free-subscription model, relying into the future on the support of advertisers and sponsors to bring this valuable tool to the hospice community.

As hospice leaders, you understand that change is always a challenge. I encourage you to approach the new newsletter with an open mind. Cordt and his editor will be experimenting with various features and options from day one, so be patient. The newsletter you receive on January 1 will *not* be the same as the newsletter you receive on April 1 or July 1. It will be an invigorating journey of discovery for all of us!

In the next week or two, you'll start seeing a link in *Hospice News Today* to take you to the *Hospice and Palliative Care Today* website to register for your free subscription commencing January 1. Please be sure to respond—and please share the link freely with anyone and everyone who might be interested.

It's been a rewarding journey for me since 2012 to build this tool for my friends and colleagues in the hospice community. Cordt was one of my first subscribers, so it's especially gratifying to be able to hand the newsletter to him.

As a reminder, this transition for *Hospice News Today* has no bearing on the respected online trade publication, *Hospice News*.

Look for more transition information in the days ahead.

In the meantime time, you can learn more about Cordt [here](#).

Thanks for your continued readership and interest.

Mark Cohen

Editor & Publisher, Hospice News Today

### [Journal of Palliative Medicine - High Impact Articles - Core Roles and Responsibilities of Physicians in Hospice Care: A Statement by and for U.S. Hospice and Palliative Care Physicians.](#)

By Ira Byock and on behalf of HPM Physicians Concerned About Hospice Care\*.

Physicians are integral members of hospice interdisciplinary teams (IDTs). This statement delineates the core roles and responsibilities of hospice medical directors (HMDs) and hospice physicians who are designated by

the hospice program to fulfill core HMD responsibilities. In addition, we describe the basic elements of hospice programs' structure and function required for hospice physicians to fulfill their roles and responsibilities. Finally, we call attention to hospice program characteristics and circumstances of the work environment that should raise a hospice physician's concerns that hospice patients and families are at risk of receiving low-quality care.

## Hospice Provider News

### [Rosen, Barrasso, Baldwin, Fischer Pass Bipartisan Resolution Designating November 2023 as “National Hospice And Palliative Care Month”](#)

*News Release*

November 29, 2023

Washington, DC—Last night, the U.S. Senate unanimously passed a bipartisan resolution by Senators Jacky Rosen (D-NV), John Barrasso (R-WY), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), and Deb Fischer (R-NE)—the co-chairs and co-founders of the bipartisan Senate Comprehensive Care Caucus—recognizing November 2023 as National Hospice and Palliative Care Month.

*Notable Mentions: Ben Marcantonio, National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization.*

### [Hospice Providers Developing New Strategies for Recruitment, Retention](#)

*Hospice News*

November 30, 2023

Having a solid understanding of worker priorities will give hospices an advantage in hunting for new recruits as workforce shortages continue.

*Notable Mentions: Lynne Sexten, Agrace Hospice & Supportive Care.*

### [Salary increases, bonuses help to address nurse staffing challenges, hospice survey finds.](#)

*McKnight's Home Care Daily*

December 1, 2023

Hospice workers saw relatively high wage growth and sign-on bonuses in the last year, according to the 2023-2024 Hospice Salary & Benefits Report released this week from the Hospital & Healthcare Compensation Service. Registered nurses in hospices received raises of just over 4.5%, on average, and their national hourly pay totaled just above \$45, according to the report, which was made in partnership with the National Association for Home Care & Hospice.

## Palliative Care Provider News

### [GeriPal: Redefining Alzheimer's Disease: A Podcast with Heather Whitson, Jason Karlawish, Lon Schneider.](#)

There is a growing push to change how we define Alzheimer's disease from what was historically a clinically defined syndrome to a newer biological definition based on the presence of positive amyloid biomarkers.

## Clinical News

### ['Tears streaming down my face'—New Chevy commercial hits home with Americans](#)

**Declaring 'let's make today a good day,' a new ad released by Chevrolet offers a ray of hope for the families of Americans affected by Alzheimer's and dementia**

*USA Today*

November 29, 2023

An emotional holiday commercial from Chevrolet is hitting home with many Americans and could very well become one of those ads we'll never forget. The automaker's more than five-minute ad, called "A Holiday to Remember," opens with a family gathering. A man and his daughter are talking about the declining well-being of his wife, who has early-stage Alzheimer's. "There's some days she doesn't even recognize me," he says, answering his daughter's question about whether her mom has more bad days than good. A young woman, presumably the older couple's granddaughter, overhears the conversation and makes a decision. "Let's make today a good day," she tells her grandmother—who sits with a vacant look—before carefully leading her to a blue 1972 Chevrolet Suburban in the garage. As John Denver's "Sunshine On My Shoulders" plays, the young woman drives her grandmother through town, reminding her of pivotal places in her life, like her childhood home, her high school, and a drive-in theater that triggers a memory. It was there the now elderly woman's husband first kissed his wife-to-be, the granddaughter says. Her grandmother then corrects her: "No, I kissed him. He was far too shy." She then tells her teary-eyed granddaughter: "Bill! I need to see Bill." The pair return to the family home, where the longtime couple hold each other and kiss with tears streaming down their faces. He has her, for a moment. The ad was created with help from the Alzheimer's Association because most importantly, the commercial showcases what people living with Alzheimer's and their families go through, especially around the holidays. ... "We're not going to go spend a trillion dollars in media," [Steve] Majoros [Chevrolet's head of marketing, told *Ad Age*] said. Focusing on the holidays is a way to appeal to consumers with "warm, emotive stories." The commercial was first shown during Fox's Thanksgiving Day NFL broadcast. ... The ad is still making its rounds on all social media platforms and will likely continue to throughout the holiday season. ... *Automotive News* wrote in its reaction to the ad that "the holidays can be a difficult time for family members of loved ones with dementia and Alzheimer's disease." But Chevy's new ad "portrays how the season can also spark moments of joy, however fleeting."

[Editor's Note: To view the five-minute ad, click [here](#).]

## **[Self-care helps cope with grief](#)**

By Terri Steinbrink

*Billings (MT) Gazette*

November 27, 2023

Billings, MT—"Grief is not a sign of weakness, nor a lack of faith. It is the price of love." Those words on a sign at River Stone Health Hospice Home reflect the reality of grief. Grief is not a problem to be solved or fixed. Grief is an experience that requires support rather than solutions. Seeing grief that way changes everything. Grief often comes in what feels like waves. Holidays, anniversaries and even something as simple as seeing your loved one's favorite brand of peanut butter in the store can bring up waves of grief. As with ocean waves, when you stop struggling, the waves will carry you to shore. It's important to remember that you will not go back to the same place where you began. Grief and the new realities that come with it will change you. Over time, your experience of grief will be different. Different doesn't mean forgetting; it means rediscovering who you are and reengaging in the world.

[Editor's Note: The author is a bereavement specialist and chaplain with RiverStone Health Hospice, Billings, MT.]

## **[Lower Cape Fear LifeCare attains highest level in We Honor Veterans program](#)**

*Brunswick Beacon (Shallotte, NC)*

November 30, 2023

Wilmington, NC—Lower Cape Fear LifeCare recently attained Level Five Partnership in the We Honor Veterans program, a collaboration of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization and the Department of Veterans Affairs. Level Five is the highest level in the program, and only four% of hospices in the United States have earned the distinction. The nonprofit received notification of attaining Level Five status just before the dedication of its second Veterans Memorial Garden on its Wilmington campus.

### **[Still more Ohio CVS pharmacies accused of staffing-related problems](#)**

*Ohio Capital Journal*

November 30, 2023

In hearings into conditions at one of its Ohio stores, lawyers for pharmacy giant CVS last month told regulators that problems were due to understaffing and extra tasks imposed by the coronavirus pandemic. But the Ohio Board of Pharmacy continues to find such problems—which could threaten patient safety—at CVS stores across Ohio. Some were found as recently as late September. The board on Tuesday issued notices of possible violations against two additional CVS stores and at one where it previously found problems. They come in addition to citations against about a dozen other CVS stores. The most recent citations accuse CVS of improper handling of dangerous drugs, dirty conditions and six-day backlogs in filling prescriptions. As it has previously, CVS called the findings “isolated incidents.” “We are working cooperatively with the Board of Pharmacy to resolve these isolated incidents,” spokesman Matt Blanchette said in an email. ... Current and former employees have told the Capital Journal that CVS management didn’t increase staff enough at those stores to handle the new prescriptions, creating miserable working conditions and massive turnover. Regulatory inspections obtained earlier this year found a lack of controls over dangerous drugs—including opioids—expired and adulterated drugs on shelves, and at least one instance of an improperly filled prescription that harmed a patient. At one store, there was a month-long backlog to fill prescriptions.

*[Editor’s Note: To view a five-minute Boston Globe video report, “CVS pharmacists are burned out and frustrated. What’s being done?,” click [here](#).]*

## **Regulatory News**

### **[MedPAC Meeting 12/7-8/23.](#)**

Register for the Thursday, December 7 afternoon session (1:30PM to 5:00PM) by clicking [here](#). Topics covered include: Assessing payment adequacy and updating payments: Hospice services.

*Notable Mentions: Kim Neuman.*

### **[Why Are Nonprofit Hospitals Focused More on Dollars Than Patients?](#)**

*By Amol S. Navathe, MD, PhD*

*New York Times*

November 30, 2023

Nonprofit hospitals have been caught doing some surprising things, given how they are supposed to serve the public good in exchange for being exempt from federal, state and local taxes—exemptions that added up to \$28 billion in 2020. Detailed media reports show them hounding poor patients for money, cutting nurse staffing too aggressively and giving preferential treatment to the rich over the poor.

*[Editor's Note: The author, a practicing physician, is a senior fellow at the Leonard Davis Institute of Health Economics and a co-director of the Healthcare Transformation Institute at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.]*

## **M&A News**

### **[By the Bay Health, Mission Hospice & Home Care, Hope Hospice to Complete Triple Merger](#)**

*Hospice News*

November 30, 2023

Three independent providers—By the Bay Health, Mission Hospice & Home Care and Hope Hospice—will merge, becoming the largest nonprofit hospice network in northern California. By the Bay and Mission in September announced their plans to merge. In the intervening months, Hope Hospice also joined the transaction. The organizations indicated that joining forces would make them stronger competitors in the marketplace as well as improve access to care in the communities they serve. The merger will also bolster the combined company's recruitment and retention efforts, according to By the Bay Health CEO Skelly Wingard. ... Each of the three organizations is a pioneer in its own right. By the Bay Health was the first hospice to operate in its home state. Mission was the first to launch in California's San Mateo County, and Hope was among the earliest nonprofits to serve the East Bay Tri-Valley region near San Francisco. The path forward will include integration of the three organizations' operations, as well as configuring their leadership team, staffing and boards. ... Post-merger, the combined organization will have the capacity to serve more than 1,100 patients per day, with more than 500 community volunteers and 600 multidisciplinary staff who provide hospice, home health, palliative care, transitional care, pediatric care, bereavement counseling and dementia support. The organization will also include Mission House—the only residential hospice house in the region.

*[Editor's Note: To read the news release from the three providers, click [here](#).]*

### **[HCA to buy bankrupt Texas hospital](#)**

*Becker's Hospital Review*

November 30, 2023

Nashville, Tenn.-based HCA Healthcare is buying bankrupt Trinity Regional Hospital Sachse (Texas) for \$41 million in a deal that is expected to close by the end of January, Bloomberg Law reported Nov. 29. A bankruptcy judge approved the sale Nov. 29 after an auction for the hospital was held earlier in the month, according to the report. Trinity Regional Hospital Sachse filed for bankruptcy in August. It opened two years ago and since then has defaulted on around \$70 million of municipal bonds that were issued in 2020. Trinity Regional Hospital Sachse's owner listed assets of \$50 million to \$100 million and liabilities of \$100 million to \$500 million on the bankruptcy petition. Trinity Regional Hospital Sachse is a nonprofit 32-bed hospital with surgical services, an emergency department and both inpatient and outpatient care.

### **[CT presents draft settlement in YNHH-Prospect hospitals sale](#)**

*CT Mirror*

November 30, 2023

State officials have presented a draft settlement agreement to parties involved in Yale New Haven Health's bid to purchase three Connecticut hospitals owned by Prospect Medical Holdings, and hospital executives are exchanging proposals with the state, a spokeswoman for Office of Health Strategy told *The Connecticut Mirror*. ... Dana Marnane, a spokeswoman for Yale New Haven Health, confirmed that settlement proposals were exchanged and that hospital officials are "engaged in discussions" with the state. ... Representatives for Prospect Medical and Eastern Connecticut Health Network, which owns Manchester Memorial and Rockville General hospitals, could not immediately be reached for comment Thursday. A spokeswoman for Waterbury Hospital declined to comment. ... Hospital leaders agreed last month to keep the negotiations with OHS confidential. They have been meeting regularly and are scheduled to meet again next week, sources said. ... Records show that the acquisition has already taken longer to gain state approval than several other Connecticut hospital mergers. ... Meanwhile, as the months pass, hospital executives, legislators and local officials say the threat of closure is growing, with the Prospect hospitals owing tens of millions of dollars to vendors and physicians and in taxes.

## **Post-Acute Care News**

### **[Providence posts \\$310M operating loss in Q3](#)**

*Becker's Hospital CFO Report*

November 29, 2023

Renton, Wash.-based Providence reported a \$310 million operating loss (-4.3% margin) in the third quarter, down from a \$164 million loss (-2.3% margin) in the same period last year, according to financial documents published Nov. 29. Despite a 5% year-over-year increase in third-quarter revenue, the 51-hospital system's overall performance was affected by a 7% increase in expenses, which was driven by wage increases, higher supply costs and higher costs to serve patient volumes. In the third quarter, salary and benefit expenses rose 8% year over year. Supply costs increased 8% compared to the third quarter of 2022, largely due to a 21% increase in pharmaceutical costs, according to the health system. ... For the nine months ending Sept. 30, Providence reported an \$857 million operating loss, compared with a \$1.1 billion operating loss in the prior-year period.

### **[Cleveland Clinic cuts operating loss to \\$14.9M in Q3](#)**

*Becker's Hospital CFO Report*

November 29, 2023

Cleveland Clinic reported a \$14.9 million operating loss in the third quarter of 2023, resulting in an operating margin of -0.4%, compared with a \$28.3 million loss and a -0.9% operating margin year over year, according to financial documents published Nov. 29. The health system saw revenues of \$3.6 billion in the quarter ending Sept. 30, up from \$3.3 billion over the same time period last year. Expenses increased to \$3.4 billion from \$3.1 billion over that period in 2022. "The growth in expenses is primarily due to higher patient volumes and inflationary trends that increased salaries, wages and benefits, supplies expenses and pharmaceutical costs," the health system said in the report. ... Salaries, wages and benefits increased 8.1% in the third quarter, compared to the same period in 2022. Supply expenses increased 11.6% over the same period last year and pharmaceutical costs increased 21.1%.

### **[Dartmouth Health says it will not conduct more layoffs](#)**

November 28, 2023

After laying off 75 workers and eliminating 100 job vacancies in June, Dartmouth Health confirmed through a spokesperson that the health system has “currently no plans for additional layoffs to improve our financial performance,” Valley News reported Nov. 27. The Lebanon, N.H.-based health system reported a loss of \$8.2 million for the first quarter of fiscal year 2024, which ended Sept. 30. In the same period last year, Dartmouth Health reported losses of more than \$40 million. Dartmouth Health officials pointed to the performance improvement plan it launched in November 2022 as the reason for the improvement. The plan aims for the health system to break even by the end of the fiscal year on June 30, 2024. Dartmouth Health’s revenues increased by 15% in the first quarter compared with the same period last year.

### [\*\*Four Iowa care facilities added to federal watchlist of nursing homes\*\*](#)

*Iowa Capital Dispatch*

November 29, 2023

Four Iowa nursing homes have been added to the federal list of the nation’s worst care facilities. Over the past four months, the homes have all been deemed eligible for inclusion on the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services’ national list of Special-Focus Facilities. They join six other Iowa care facilities already deemed eligible for inclusion on the periodic list of nursing homes that have recurring quality-of-care problems.

### [\*\*Casey and Fetterman back proposed nursing home staffing rules as Pa. industry objects\*\*](#)

*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

November 30, 2023

The federal government has proposed new staffing rules for nursing homes—including requiring registered nurses to be on site 24 hours a day—a proposal that has drawn the support of Pennsylvania’s two U.S. senators but opposition from the state’s nursing home industry. ... While U.S. Sens. Bob Casey and John Fetterman, D-Pa., endorsed the proposal, more than two dozen other senators—both Democrats and Republicans—said it would hurt facilities in rural areas. And Pennsylvania’s nursing home association said the proposed rule would exacerbate a shortage of trained health care workers. ... Mr. Casey and Mr. Fetterman joined 12 of their Democratic colleagues earlier this month to urge HHS to move ahead with the rule. Mr Casey chairs the Senate Aging Committee. ... Still, more than twice as many senators—28—signed a letter to [CMS Administrator] Ms. [Chiquita] Brooks-LaSure opposing the rule. ... Also in opposition was the Pennsylvania Health Care Association, the trade group for the state’s nursing homes. Mr. Casey and Fetterman are “clearly out of touch with the realities facing health care in Pennsylvania,” said Zach Shamberg, the association’s president and CEO.

### [\*\*How Nursing Homes Fit Into the Expensive Housing Dilemma for Aging Adults\*\*](#)

*Skilled Nursing News*

November 30, 2023



The costs of long-term care in every setting, including nursing homes, is considered out of reach for most seniors, averaging more than \$100 per day nationwide. This is coupled with the fact that the majority of older adults with very low incomes will need such services and have the fewest resources to pay for them. That's according to a report published on Thursday by the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, which largely focused on housing options for older adults. Robert Kramer, co-founder and strategic advisor for the National Investment Center for Seniors Housing & Care and panelist on the webinar, expanded on this sentiment, adding that there is a large group of seniors that don't qualify for government support, but can't afford most other options out there that are more on the private pay end. "This report educates and informs the fact that wherever you want (to receive care), that combination of housing and care is really expensive ... we need to collaborate on solutions," he said. ... Moving forward, Kramer said long-term care providers and government entities must innovate and scale care offerings and settings to bridge the gap. ... Meghan Rose, general counsel and chief government affairs officer with LeadingAge CA spoke briefly on providing dual-eligible beneficiaries with a "full array of wraparound services" to really address the gap between Medicare and Medi-Cal (California's Medicaid program) coverage.

[Editor's Note: For additional coverage of the Joint Center for Housing Studies' report, see "[Baby Boomers Face 'Urgent Need' for More Affordable Senior Housing Options](#)" in Senior Housing News.]

## General News

### [Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter never tried to hide the effects of growing old](#)

By Martha Ross, Columnist

East Bay Times/Bay Area News Group

November 30, 2023

There's no downplaying the fact that Jimmy Carter didn't look like the man that Americans had long come to know when he attended two memorial services this week for his wife, Rosalynn Carter, who died Nov. 19 at age 96. ... At Tuesday's service in Atlanta, his face was pale, his mouth hung open and he did not make eye contact with many mourners, the *New York Times* reported. ... "He's coming to the end, and he's very, very physically diminished," his grandson, Jason Carter, told the *New York Times* in an interview before the service at the Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church at Emory University. "But I think he was proud and happy that he was there for her till the very end, and he wasn't going to miss this for anything." ... Jordan said the couple didn't lose their forthrightness when it came to aging. Family members said the Carters felt no need to hide the effects of growing old. "While many famous people guard their image and hide frailty, the Carters did not," [Washington Post reporter Mary] Jordan also wrote. ... Jordan reported last week that Jimmy Carter remains mentally aware and at times is remarkably sharp, but he was unable to speak at Tuesday's service. Some family members had expressed concern about Carter traveling 164 miles from his home in Plains to attend Tuesday's tribute service in Atlanta, the *New York Times* said. His decision to make such a journey in his condition "was, to some, shocking," the *New York Times* said. But his family also recognized the importance of his presence, and he had an honored place in the front row of the church. ... Tuesday's service was televised, so many Americans got their first glimpse of Carter in some time, at least since he entered hospice. But it's not likely that the famously stubborn and tenacious former president would be concerned if some people were stunned by how visibly frail he has become. He wanted to be there for Rosalynn, as family and friends said.

### [Hospice patients, pets focus of Pet Peace of Mind, which has Vancouver branch](#)

November 30, 2023

... Pet Peace of Mind is a nationwide nonprofit that allows hospice patients to worry less about their pets' care. The program partners with hospice and health care agencies—one of which is in Vancouver—to provide services, such as feeding, exercise, grooming and veterinary visits for end-of-life patients who are unable to take care of their beloved animals. And in the case of a patient dying, the program will find the pet a new family. "As a family member, when you're experiencing significant loss, it's not only a very emotional time, you are often overwhelmed with the grieving process so it is very helpful to have a company that is empathetic and takes that burden away," [Belinda] Walker said. "The program was a little miracle." The program was created in 2009 by Dianne McGill who, at the time, was working for a different health care organization. One day, she received a call that someone in end-of-life care needed help finding a new home for their pet. After helping this patient, McGill realized there was a gap in the health care and pet industries in providing this type of care. Over the last 14 years, the program has popped up across the United States—training hospice and health care workers and volunteers. "There is a lot of anxiety for patients, particularly what is going to happen to their pets after they pass," said Christy Bork, program manager for Pet Peace of Mind. "So, we train our partners so that we avoid pets ending up in the shelter system." The Pet Peace of Mind program is free to all clients, but it relies solely on donations. ... Sheryl Reeder, volunteer coordinator for Eden Hospice, said the program is vital for not only the mental health of the patient but also the animal. From dogs and cats to lizards and horses, the program offers assistance for all pet types. "We've re-homed an entire 5-gallon fish tank once," Reeder said. "We've re-homed ducks, bunny rabbits, just about every kind of pet." Reeder said the program tries to work with the patient ahead of time on where their pet will go so they are part of the decision-making process. But Reeder said the focus of the program is to keep people and their pets together for as long as possible.

## **Today's 10-Second Question**

[\*\*How have you used AI this week? Share responses here.\*\*](#) Responses shared tomorrow.

## **Today's Encouragement**

***Be kind. Everyone you meet is carrying a heavy burden. ~Ian MacLaren***