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December 8th, 2023

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Palliative Care News' Top 5 Stories of 2023

Palliative Care News

December 6, 2023

A look back at Palliative Care News' five most-read stories this year paints a picture of trends shaping the serious illness care space. Securing reimbursement—and the promise of value-based contracts—continues to be top of mind for many palliative care providers as they look ahead to 2024. Operators have their eyes on the ever-shifting payment landscape and the headwinds and opportunities that come with it. Meanwhile, more providers are increasingly working to address health disparities among underserved populations in various settings, including prisons and rural areas, among others. But in the midst of this, workforce shortages and clinical capacity issues remain obstacles to palliative care access. The following are the most-read *Palliative Care News* articles of 2023.

1. [State Palliative Care Laws Impact Where Patients Die](#) (June 14)
2. ['It's Where We're at Right Now': US Prison System Struggling to Keep Up with Growing Need for Palliative Care](#) (Aug. 9)
3. [Medicare Advantage Crackdown Could Dampen Palliative Care Growth](#) (May 3)
4. [Palliative Care the Next Generation: How the Service May Grow and Evolve](#) (April 14)

5. [CMMI Deputy Director Ellen Lukens: CMS to Take Multifaceted Approach to Palliative Care](#) (April 21)

[**More people with dementia opting to age in place over senior living**](#)

McKnight's Senior Living

December 7, 2023

People living with dementia are more likely to choose aging in place over an assisted living or a continuing care retirement community, according to a new study. A research letter in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* reported that over the last two decades, a variety of factors have shifted where people with dementia live, including family caregiver availability, declining marriage and birth rates, alternative residential care arrangements, Medicaid expansion of home- and community- based services and the long-term care workforce crisis. Researchers said their study showed that the COVID-19 pandemic noticeably altered living arrangements for individuals living with dementia, increasing the number of those opting to age in place. ... What concerned researchers was increasing functional impairment and levels of unmet needs among those living alone or in a residential care setting, including assisted living and CCRCs, "given the limited regulatory oversight and lack of uniformity in services available in these settings."

[**Bipartisan Legislation Aims to Block CMS Staffing Proposal—Most Recently With Senate Bill**](#)

Skilled Nursing News

December 6, 2023

Legislation to block the nursing home minimum staffing proposal gained major traction this week, as a bill introduced on the Senate floor late Tuesday received more bipartisan support. Sen. Deb Fischer (R-Neb.) led the way with the Protecting Rural Seniors' Access to Care Act, which aims to stop the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services from finalizing the minimum staffing proposal—along with requiring that a nursing home workforce advisory panel be created. The Senate bill is endorsed by more than 90 organizations, according to Fischer's office.



[**NPA Says House of Representatives' Passage of Bill to Provide Veterans Additional Access to the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly Will Improve Their Lives; Urges Swift Senate Passage**](#)

PRNewswire

December 6, 2023

Washington, DC—On the second anniversary of the passing of the Honorable Bob Dole (R-KS), the National PACE Association praises the U.S. House of Representatives for passing the Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act (H.R. 542) by a vote of 414-5, which will give veterans increased access to the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly across the nation. We urge the Senate to pass this bill soon so more veterans can enjoy the highest quality of life possible as they age by receiving any care needed at home or in the community. The legislation would establish formal partnerships between Programs of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) and nearby Veterans Affairs Medical Centers located within their geographic service areas. This policy change would broadly increase access for veterans to the innovative PACE model of care so they may continue to live at home, despite needing a nursing home level of care.

[**America Is Having Yet Another Drug Shortage. Here's Why It Keeps Happening.**](#)

By Emily Tucker, PhD

New York Times

December 6, 2023

The American Society of Health-System Pharmacists found this summer that nearly all of the members it surveyed were experiencing drug shortages, which generally affect half a million Americans. Cancer patients have scrambled as supplies of chemotherapy drugs dwindle. ... Over half of the shortages documented this summer by health consulting firm IQV IA had persisted for more than two years. But even though drug shortages affect millions of Americans, policymakers and industry leaders have provided little to no long-term relief for people in need. ... The people who are most affected by supply chain vulnerabilities—patients—are also those with least say in the choice to buy from reliable manufacturers. ... Legislative action is the only real way to ensure the availability of essential medications. After 20 years of drug shortages, it seems clear that markets alone are not the solution. And there are a few specific ways Congress should address drug shortages. The first is to ensure better quality drug manufacturing. Modernizing manufacturing facilities would make them more reliable and prevent shortages. The second is to improve the adaptability of drug manufacturing itself. Manufacturers should be able to switch quickly to alternative facilities or to increase production when demand unexpectedly increases. The last is to maintain buffer inventory of essential medications within our health care system.

Editor Picks

[**Palliative Care News' Top 5 Stories of 2023**](#)

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Hospice Provider News

[Marilu Henner, actress of ‘Taxi’ fame, to speak at Sarasota-Bradenton Tidewell event](#)

Bradenton (FL) Herald

December 6, 2023

Sarasota, FL—Marilu Henner, who came to fame as Elaine O’Connor-Nardo in the sitcom “Taxi,” had only just begun her remarkable career when the series premiered in the late 1970s. She went on to star in 72 films, seven Broadway shows and a second hit sitcom, “Evening Shade.” Henner, 71, is scheduled to be the keynote speaker for Tidewell Foundation’s 15th Annual Signature Luncheon on March 1 at The Ritz-Carlton, Sarasota. ... Henner is a spokesperson for Alzheimer’s disease awareness. She has been an advocate for hospice care, and in 2019 she became a spokesperson for the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization. Proceeds from the luncheon help the Tidewell Foundation fund charity care, grief support services, specialized veterans care, music therapy, telehealth and other programs.

[Prineville Hospice Auction raises \\$180,000](#)

Central Oregonian (Prineville, OR)

December 6, 2023

Prineville, OR—St. Charles Foundation’s annual Prineville Hospice Auction was a tremendous success, with more than 550 individuals in attendance and raising more than

\$180,000 to support hospice programs. The dollar amount smashed the stated goal of \$110,000 prior to the event. The annual event, hosted at the Crook County Fairgrounds Indoor Arena included a dinner, silent auction, raffle and a lively live auction of handmade quilts and elaborately decorated Christmas trees.

[Mary Washington Hospice's Sixth Annual Light Up a Life Raises Over \\$34,000](#)

News Release

December 4, 2023

Fredericksburg, VA—Mary Washington Hospice hosted its sixth annual Light Up a Life Illumination event on November 9, 2023. This special event allowed community members to purchase luminaries in their loved ones' memory. Over 350 individuals were honored, and their names were read aloud by the hospice team during an intimate program in the Meditation Garden at Mary Washington Hospital. The proceeds from Light Up a Life benefit Mary Washington Hospice, Grief Support Services, and Mary Washington Hospital Auxiliary.

[Gentiva Hospice Opens New Branch](#)

Greeneville (TN) Sun

December 6, 2023

Greeneville, TN—Gentiva Hospice held a ribbon-cutting ceremony at its new location Dec. 1. ... The new branch in Greeneville will provide support to patients, families and facilities in Greene and Cocke counties, according to information provided by the Greene County Partnership.

[CVS to start rebranding its healthcare services segment this year](#)

McKnight's Home Care Daily

December 6, 2023

CVS disclosed Tuesday that it will begin to roll out its newly rebranded healthcare services segment this month. The new brand, called CVS Healthspire, includes CVS' suite of care delivery businesses: Caremark, Cordavis, Oak Street Health, MinuteClinic and the company's home care entity Signify Health. ... Evidence of the rebrand will soon be visible, according to the company; the five businesses within Healthspire will soon incorporate "Part of CVS Healthspire" to their assets.

[HopeWest accepting cryptocurrency donations](#)

KREX-TV (Grand Junction, CO)

December 6, 2023

Grand Junction, CO—HopeWest, a nonprofit hospice care organization on the Western Slope, is moving ahead with the times and now accepting cryptocurrency donations. ... As of November 2022, HopeWest started accepting cryptocurrency donations and accepts around 100 different cryptocurrencies. HopeWest's Debbie Horwitz tells WesternSlopeNow crypto donations benefit HopeWest donors by helping them avoid capital gains tax. Plus, crypto donations are tax deductible.

[South Hill hospital to cease in-home hospice, home health services Dec. 31](#)

News & Record (South Boston, VA)

December 6, 2023

South Hill, VA—VCU Health Community Memorial Hospital in South Hill will no longer provide in-home community health and hospice services starting Dec. 31, hospital officials announced Monday. ... Kristy Fowler, marketing and communications specialist for VCU Health CMH, said the hospital will continue to provide these services on “an inpatient and outpatient basis, [but] they will no longer be available in the home.” ... Fowler explained that home health and hospice services declined throughout the pandemic and are no longer part of VCU Health CMH’s core business.

[Here’s why you can’t die peacefully in Oklahoma.](#)

By Abby Remming

The Oklahoman

December 6, 2023

... Having Medicare or a Medicare Advantage plan would cover hospice, but many people have private insurance from work or state Medicaid plans. Private insurance and Medicaid Advantage plans at times can have a hospice benefit but limit which companies can be used. Applying for Medicare will ensure you are covered for hospice. ... I currently work as a hospital social worker and assist many people who need hospice. Many times, I have had to share with patients and their families that, while they may be ready to peacefully pass away, hospice coverage is not included in the patient’s current insurance plan. Providing end-of-life care is extremely difficult without the added burden of worrying whether insurance will cover the benefit. Those without the benefit and who need the service are then reliant upon the generosity of the companies to absorb the cost. If the Medicaid Advantage plan is picked, a person would need to decide if they wanted the benefit to either cover nursing home care or in-home hospice care. A Medicaid Advantage plan might not cover hospice even when the policyholder believes they have the benefit.

[Nursing home palliative, hospice care provide CNAs new opportunities](#)

McKnight’s Long Term Care News

December 7, 2023

A lack of end-of-life training may leave certified nurse assistants unprepared to work with patients receiving palliative or hospice care, but nursing homes must do more to cross-train and build their confidence. That was the message this week from Karl Steinberg, MD, CEO of Stone Mountain Medical Associates, and certified nurse aide Telisa Green, who addressed barriers to quality, end-of-life care during a webinar hosted by the National Association of Health Care Assistants. The speakers recognized that education in this care area can be hard to come by for CNAs, who are broadly trained in vitals and other care-

taking tasks. “Almost all of the palliative care skills that CNAs learn are on-the-job training,” Steinberg acknowledged. “I absolutely will advocate for increasing the availability of palliative care training for nursing assistants.” ... Both presenters emphasized the importance of prioritizing a patient and their family’s comfort over too much devotion to a formalized care plan, as well as being an advocate for the patient’s well-being—especially in end-of-life and hospice settings.

Palliative Care Provider News

[Palliative Care News’ Top 5 Stories of 2023](#)

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December 6, 2023

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Clinical News

[Hospice of Santa Barbara’s Light Up a Life Ceremony Honors Lost Loved Ones During Holiday Season](#)

Santa Barbara (CA) Noozhawk

December 6, 2023

Montecito, CA—Hospice of Santa Barbara brought people together Wednesday evening for its 40th annual Light Up a Life ceremony in Montecito to honor loved ones who have passed away. Each year, Hospice of Santa Barbara holds this event in locations throughout the South Coast, where people can purchase paper stars to hang on the community Christmas tree and dedicate them to family or friends who have died. ... “One of the reasons we come here every season is because we want to be able to look around and know that we are not alone in our grief, in our love and care and remembrance of those

we've lost," the Rev. Julia Hamilton said. ... Hospice of Santa Barbara also has a Virtual Tree of Remembrance where people can dedicate a digital star and upload photos and messages for their loved ones.

[More people with dementia opting to age in place over senior living](#)

McKnight's Senior Living

December 7, 2023

People living with dementia are more likely to choose aging in place over an assisted living or a continuing care retirement community, according to a new study. A research letter in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* reported that over the last two decades, a variety of factors have shifted where people with dementia live, including family caregiver availability, declining marriage and birth rates, alternative residential care arrangements, Medicaid expansion of home- and community- based services and the long-term care workforce crisis. Researchers said their study showed that the COVID-19 pandemic noticeably altered living arrangements for individuals living with dementia, increasing the number of those opting to age in place. ... What concerned researchers was increasing functional impairment and levels of unmet needs among those living alone or in a residential care setting, including assisted living and CCRCs, "given the limited regulatory oversight and lack of uniformity in services available in these settings."

[Nurses seeking work in U.S. on the rise despite visa pause](#)

Modern Healthcare

December 6, 2023

A record number of occupational visa certificates were issued this year to nurses and other healthcare workers by the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools. The nonprofit, which helps foreign-educated nurses work in other countries by verifying their credentials for federal and state agencies, said it issued almost 27,000 visa certificates this year—85% of which were for registered nurses—twice as many as in 2022. The number of certificates has quadrupled since 2017. The commission's report also found that 78% of those who applied for a visa certificate intended to apply for a permanent green card, an increase from 64% in 2022.

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PRNewswire

December 6, 2023

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legislation would establish formal partnerships between Programs of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) and nearby Veterans Affairs Medical Centers located within their geographic service areas. This policy change would broadly increase access for veterans to the innovative PACE model of care so they may continue to live at home, despite needing a nursing home level of care.

[**America Is Having Yet Another Drug Shortage. Here's Why It Keeps Happening.**](#)

By Emily Tucker, PhD

New York Times

December 6, 2023

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Regulatory News

[**The Medicare Gold Rush Is Slowing Down**](#)

Wall Street Journal

December 6, 2023

The popularity of private Medicare plans has been a huge driver of profits for insurance companies in recent years. There are signs the gold rush isn't quite what it once was. ... The most immediate red flag came from the industry leader, UnitedHealth. During an investor day last week, it predicted its Medicare Advantage enrollment would grow by 450,000 to 550,000 seniors in 2024. That translates to around 5% growth next year, a significant slowdown from the 11% it grew so far this year, according to TD Cowen analyst Gary Taylor. As UnitedHealth executives were presenting in New York, The Wall Street Journal reported that the second-largest Medicare plan provider, Humana, was in merger talks with Cigna. While Cigna's interest in Humana surely attests to insurers' continued desire to

expand into the Medicare market, some investors took it as a sign that Humana isn't so sure about the strength of the business going forward.

[Shifting focus to MA will alter 'life as we know it' for home care providers, experts say](#)

McKnight's Home Care Daily

December 7, 2023

Medicare Advantage is disrupting the traditional home care landscape, experts from the Research Institute for Home Care said in a webinar hosted Wednesday afternoon by the National Association for Home Care & Hospice. As MA continues to dominate Medicare and cover those beneficiaries receiving home health, certain trends—such as access issues or shifting utilization rates for services within traditional Medicare—have become more pronounced. “Medicare Advantage is growing, and that’s going to result in a decreased volume in home health claims among traditional Medicare beneficiaries,” Elizabeth Hamlett, senior research associate for evaluation and health economics at KNG Health, said during the webinar about the recently released 2023 RIHC [Research Institute for Home Care] Chartbook. Home health users in general also may become more reflective of the characteristics of MA beneficiaries—which essentially means sicker and poorer, she said. ... However, MA and fee-for-service beneficiaries showed greater variation in their reported access to home health services. “What we’re seeing here is potentially an access problem for Medicare Advantage users,” Hamlett said.

[CMS' New Transparency Rule Can Help 'Weed Out a Few Bad Actors' but Won't Impact Deals Much, Other Factors at Play](#)

Skilled Nursing News

December 6, 2023

Nursing home ownership changes have largely been embraced by the industry and will have little impact on deal activity, with the new transparency rule from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services having very little impact on the sector. Instead, the new rule will force nursing homes to report ownership details during critical junctures like Medicare or Medicaid applications and recertification, according to executive managing director of VIUM Capital, Steven W. Kennedy. And if anything, the new transparency rule will eliminate any bad actors on the real estate and operating side because these might cause them “discomfort,” and that’s certainly better for the industry, he said. “Every industry no matter where you are has some bad actors,” he said. “I think in general, skilled nursing has very few bad apples, but if they’re out there, this can help weed them out.”

[OIG's audit of nursing home workers in Louisiana finds flaws in background check process](#)

Skilled Nursing News

December 6, 2023

A federally commissioned report released Wednesday found that nursing homes in Louisiana failed to complete background checks on a portion of their non-licensed

employees. In conducting the audit to examine whether Louisiana nursing homes complied with federal requirements for background checks, the Office of Inspector General chose a sample of 9 Louisiana nursing homes out of a total of 276 licensed facilities in the state, basing its sample size on a variety of risk factors and on the need to select nursing homes in urban and rural settings, the agency said. ... The OIG report states. "Although Federal requirements do not specify the methods or types of information that should be considered for a background check to be regarded as having been satisfactorily completed, we identified potential limitations in the nursing homes' background check searches and adjudication methods for 49 of the 209 non-licensed employees we reviewed." In response to OIG's findings and recommendations, Louisiana has agreed to update its standard survey process to ensure routine monitoring of nursing homes' compliance with background check requirements by reviewing a sample of 5% of current non-licensed staff and by directing nursing homes to conduct self-audits of current personnel files. ... Among the findings, some disturbing practices emerged. Of the 9 nursing homes closely investigated, six nursing homes, and some of the staffing companies with which they contracted, had employee background check searches conducted that did not include a statewide search of State police records.

M&A News

[How PE Firms Are Adjusting Hospice Exit Strategies in a Shifting Market](#)

Hospice News

December 6, 2023

Private equity firms typically turn around and sell an asset within three to five years post-acquisition. However, some may slow that cycle down in today's economic environment. The presence of private equity firms in the hospice arena has expanded exponentially during the past several years. But this year, deal volume slowed across the board. While the slowdown applies to all buyers, the decline in private equity transactions is particularly noteworthy because they were among the most aggressive acquirers in the space between 2019 and 2022.

[Care Advantage Acquires Nova Home Health Care, Delivers On 18th Acquisition Since 2018](#)

Home Health Care News

December 6, 2023

Care Advantage announced Tuesday that it has acquired Nova Home Health Care. The acquisition expands Care Advantage's Northern Virginia footprint—a market that CEO Tim Hanold believes is an important one for current and future growth. ... Hanold told Home Health Care News, "... Northern Virginia is part of the Metropolitan D.C. area, and is a very diverse market. We want to make sure that we're approaching that in a smart and culturally sensitive way." Richmond, Virginia-based Care Advantage is a home-based care company that has more than 45 locations throughout Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Washington, D.C., and North Carolina. The company offers both personal care and home

health care services. On its end, Nova Home Health Care is a personal care company that serves the Medicaid population. The company has ties to a number of different communities that make up the diverse population in the area. “They have real deep market penetration with the Vietnamese community, as well as the Hispanic and African American communities,” Hanold said.

[Home Care Company Best of Care Acquires Barton’s Angels](#)

Home Health Care News

December 6, 2023

The home care provider Best of Care is expanding its portfolio once again, this time on its 43rd anniversary. On Wednesday, the company announced that it had acquired Barton’s Angels, also a home care provider. ... “Barton’s Angels was attractive to us because of its reputation, its legacy, its leadership and the overlapping business they had in the form of shared contracts and referral sources,” Best of Care CEO Kevin Smith told *Home Health Care News*. ... Best of Care also works with both Medicaid and private-pay clients. Based in Quincy, Massachusetts, the company provides services via its 450 caregivers to over 1,500 clients across all of Massachusetts. ... For Best of Care, the goal is to be close to a one-stop shop for seniors navigating the aging process.

Post-Acute Care News

[In key home care victory, House passes Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act](#)

McKnight’s Home Care Daily

December 7, 2023

Providers, industry organizations and advocates applauded the House’s passage of the Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act on Tuesday evening. “It’s a good recognition, especially on the House’s part, that reinforces home care as an industry,” Jason Lee, chief executive officer of the Home Care Association of America, said in an interview on Wednesday with McKnight’s Home Care Daily Pulse. “They see the value in the services, and that is so critically important.” The Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act would introduce various provisions to make home care more accessible for veterans. Among the key ones: The cost of providing veterans noninstitutional alternatives to nursing home services, such as home care, may not exceed 100% of the cost that would have been incurred if they had received Department of Veterans Affairs nursing home care. ... Of course, the Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act still has to win Senate approval.

[Tower Health laid off 30 people on Tuesday](#)

Philadelphia Inquirer

December 6, 2023

Tower Health laid off 30 people on Tuesday, citing efforts to streamline operations at the nonprofit health system based in Berks County. Not included in that total were an unspecified number of people in Tower’s information technology department, whose jobs were moved to an outside vendor. “Although Tower Health’s financial position has

improved, we still face challenges and are working hard collectively as an organization to improve performance,” Tower said in a statement.

General News

[Rosalynn Carter advocated for caregivers before the term was widely used. I’m so grateful.](#)

By Mitul Desai

USA Today

December 6, 2023

It started with a story. When asked about her lifelong commitment to improving mental health services and support for caregivers, former first lady Rosalynn Carter would share her experience on the campaign trail: Exhausted caregivers urgently reaching to grab her hand. Families pleading for resources. Americans bravely sharing their stories of hurdles and heartache. From these anecdotes emerge a legacy marked by courage and compassion. A woman ahead of her time, fighting for caregivers before the term was even widely used. ... I discovered the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers as a vibrant resource in an otherwise desolate landscape of caregiver support. I participated in a series of workshops that RCI facilitated aimed at helping streamline the diverse experiences of caregiving into nine distinct stages. Our hope is that this new approach—which moves beyond diagnosis-driven categorization to focus instead on the types of support needed at each phase of the experience—will inform policy and practice for health practitioners, employers, policymakers and organizations serving caregiver needs.

Equity

[Nurses seeking work in U.S. on the rise despite visa pause](#)

Modern Healthcare

December 6, 2023

A record number of occupational visa certificates were issued this year to nurses and other healthcare workers by the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools. The nonprofit, which helps foreign-educated nurses work in other countries by verifying their credentials for federal and state agencies, said it issued almost 27,000 visa certificates this year—85% of which were for registered nurses—twice as many as in 2022. The number of certificates has quadrupled since 2017. The commission’s report also found that 78% of those who applied for a visa certificate intended to apply for a permanent green card, an increase from 64% in 2022.

Inclusion News

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December 6, 2023

A record number of occupational visa certificates were issued this year to nurses and other healthcare workers by the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools. The nonprofit, which helps foreign-educated nurses work in other countries by verifying their credentials for federal and state agencies, said it issued almost 27,000 visa certificates this year—85% of which were for registered nurses—twice as many as in 2022. The number of certificates has quadrupled since 2017. The commission’s report also found that 78% of those who applied for a visa certificate intended to apply for a permanent green card, an increase from 64% in 2022.

Today's Encouragement

“We no longer believe in work/life balance: It’s all just life. And we need to know it’s a life that we want to live, filled with security, confidence, love, and meaning. The idea that we turn “off” life when we turn “on” work is outmoded. What happens to us at work, the choices we make at work, how we lead at work—all of this impacts our macro and micro quality of life, and the nature of the world we live in.”

— Janice Fraser, [Farther, Faster, and Far Less Drama: How to Reduce Stress and Make Extraordinary Progress Wherever You Lead](#)

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