

## Cordt Kassner

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## February 6th, 2024

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## Hospice Provider News

### **NHPCO publishes Culturally Sensitive Communications to Enhance Care Delivery: A resource guide for healthcare professionals**

*NHPCO Press Release; 1/30/24*

The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization's (NHPCO) Diversity Advisory Council (DAC) published *Culturally Sensitive Communications to Enhance Care Delivery: A Resource Guide for Healthcare Professionals*. ... It contains information from a multitude of NHPCO resources, such as the Hospice Through The DEI Lens report, Inclusion and Access Toolkit, Black and African American Outreach Guide, Chinese American Resource Guide, Latino Outreach Guide, and LGBTQ+ Resource Guide, as well as information from additional external research sources.

### **Where do we end our lives?**

*American Council on Science and Health, by Chuck Dinerstein, MD, MBA; 2/5/24*

The concept of an elephant's graveyard, where old elephants supposedly go to die, is more of a myth than a scientifically supported phenomenon. Humans do

not have a specific location where we gather to die, but a study looks into the matter nevertheless.

## Clinical News

### **10% of people with dementia may actually have different disease, research suggests**

*Becker's Clinical Leadership, by Ashleigh Hollowell; 2/1/24*

Certain cases of dementia — potentially up to 10% — could instead be undiagnosed liver disease and related neurological issues, according to a study published Jan. 31 in JAMA. Additionally, researchers believe that the 10% of undiagnosed liver disease and brain dysfunction could possibly be resolved with treatment. For the study, researchers analyzed a decade of data — spanning 2009 to 2019 — from 177,422 veterans who had a diagnosis of dementia, and looked for a high Fibrosis-4 score, which is a sign of advanced liver fibrosis that can lead to cirrhosis.



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### **Debate over psychedelic therapy returns to Missouri General Assembly**

*Missouri Independent, by Rebecca Rivas; 1/30/24*

Republican lawmakers are once again pushing legislation that would require Missouri to conduct a clinical study on using psilocybin, more commonly referred to as “magic mushrooms,” to treat depression, substance use or as part end-of-life care.

### **Marijuana is big business in U.S., but inconsistent regulations persist**

*Forbes, by Joshua Cohen; 2/2/24*

Marijuana is big business these days in the U.S. Revenues could reach \$40 billion this year, as the drug is now legal in 37 states for medical purposes while 23

states permit recreational use. However, there's no federal oversight and an inconsistent, patchy set of state regulations persist.

### **3 Reasons Continuous Home Care utilization is falling**

*Hospice News, by Jim Parker; 2/2/24*

Utilization continuous home care has dropped precipitously during the past decade, with labor pressures, regulatory scrutiny and billing challenges as contributing factors. Continuous home care (CHC) represented 0.9% of hospice care days during 2022, according to the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO). This is down from 1.8% in 2013.

*Notable mentions: Sarah Simmons and Patrick Harrison, NHPCO.*



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### **Strategies for positive change in opioid prescribing**

*Pharmacy Times; 2/1/24*

This is a video synopsis/summary of a *Practice Pearls* featuring Ryan Haumschild, PharmD, MS, MBA, CPEL; Megan Mitchell, PharmD, MS; Stephanie Abel, PharmD, BCPS; and Jennifer Grate, CPhT. Haumschild discusses the importance of positive change in opioid stewardship.

### **Emergency department management of common end-of-life and palliative care symptoms: Three cases**

*Cureus, by Alice Chang, James Espinosa, Alan Lucerna; 2/4/24*

... Patients with serious illness, even hospice patients, present to the ED in increasing numbers for symptom management. It has become essential for emergency physicians to care for patients who are not seeking life-sustaining measures but instead need quality-of-life interventions. The development of a clear, concise review of the most common acute symptoms can provide a framework for EM physicians to adequately address the needs of patients at the EOL.

## **I was my grandmother's caretaker before moving to the US to follow my dreams. She died 6 months later and I still feel guilty**

*Business Insider, by Erma Kershaw; 2/4/24*

... Grieving while living in a different country has been incredibly difficult. The moment I learned she'd died will stay with me forever. ... While my grandmother's passing didn't come as a surprise, the time since then has still been the most challenging period of my life. Grief is already a hard process for several reasons, but living 3,000 miles away from your loved ones makes it even harder.



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## **Regulatory News**

### **Medicare Advantage profitability on the decline, Moody's finds**

*Healthcare Finance, by Jeff Lagasse; 2/2/24*

A significant spike in utilization is putting cost pressure on insurers, which will likely affect earnings. While Medicare Advantage remains attractive to the healthcare industry due to strong growth, high revenue and earnings per member, profitability is on the decline, according to a new analysis by Moody's Investor Service.

### **CMS proposes Medicare Advantage rate cut**

*Becker's Payer Issues, by Rylee Wilson; 1/31/24*

CMS proposed a slight decrease in Medicare Advantage benchmark payments for 2025. The agency issued its proposed 2025 rate notice Jan. 31, cutting benchmark payments by 0.2% on average. Risk model revision will amount to a

2.45% decline in revenue, according to a fact sheet issued by the agency. Plans should expect to see 3.7% higher revenue overall, with an MA risk score trend of 3.86% — the average increase in risk adjustment payments year over year — offsetting risk model revisions and a projected decline in star rating bonuses.

### **Palmetto Hospice updates and review webinar: February 13, 2024**

*Press release; 2/5/24*

Webinar 2/13/24 @ 1:00 PM ET. Please [click here](#) to register for this webinar session. This session is designed to provide insight for your Hospice agency staff. During this session, a representative will provide Hospice Billing Updates, Value-Based Insurance Design (VBID) Model information, 2024 Final Rule Summary and other helpful information and tips.



## **Public Policy News**

### **Canada again delays assisted dying for the mentally ill**

*BBC, by Chloe Kim, Nadine Yousif; 2/1/24*

Canada has announced plans to again delay an expansion to its medical assistance in dying (maid) programme for people who have a mental illness.

### **A journalist assisted a woman's quest for suicide. Did he get too involved?**

*The Washington Post, by Jeremy Barr; 2/3/24*

The Boston Globe acknowledged that writer Kevin Cullen crossed an ethical line by signing a legal form for Lynda Bluestein. But the woman's husband is grateful for what he did. Kevin Cullen, a veteran columnist for the Boston Globe, spent months shadowing a terminally ill Connecticut woman as she campaigned for permission to have an assisted suicide and ultimately died that way several weeks ago. ... But Cullen did more than just chronicle [her] journey. He also got involved in her story by signing a legal form attesting that she was sound of

mind when she requested to die in Vermont, which granted her the right to do so.

## Mergers & Acquisition News

### **SSM Health assumes ownership of Visiting Nurse Association of Greater St. Louis**

*SSM Health; 2/1/24*

SSM Health and Visiting Nurse Association of Greater St. Louis (VNA) announced today they've successfully completed a transfer of ownership of VNA's health care services. Effective immediately, the exceptional services VNA is known for – including hospice care, Advanced Illness Management (AIM), community-based palliative care, private duty care, Visit-A-Bit, vaccination, wellness, and music appreciation programs – will now operate as part of SSM Health at Home.

## Post-Acute Care News

### **Private equity's growing footprint in home health care draws scrutiny**

*Alabama Reflector, by Anna Claire Vollers; 1/31/24*

Critics point to Help at Home's departure from Alabama as a cautionary tale for what can happen when states that spend little on health care rely on private equity-owned providers to care for their most vulnerable residents.

### **Elevance Health's vision: Transforming Louisiana's healthcare through acquisition**

*BNN, by Muthana Al-Najjar; 2/4/24*

In an ambitious move to transform the healthcare landscape in Louisiana, Elevance Health [for profit] has proposed an acquisition of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana (BCBSLA) [non-profit]. The move aims to leverage Elevance Health's innovative and integrated approach, focusing on broader social determinants of health to improve health outcomes and provide affordable care.

### **How does care coordination promote senior health & longevity?**

*MediaFeed.org, by Kara Lewis; 2/2/24*

... Care coordination offers several fundamental benefits to seniors, according to an American Nurses Association report:

- Fewer emergency room visits
- Reduced appointment copays and medication costs
- Fewer hospital readmissions
- Increased patient satisfaction
- Later mortality
- Improved quality of life

Having a wide range of health services available can also enhance mental and social well-being. A study of 508 patients receiving care coordination found that psychological distress decreased by 62%, while just under half observed a social benefit

## General News

### **NC report defines healthcare worker shortage and recommends solutions**

*NC Newsline, by Lynn Bonner; 1/29/24*

The healthcare workforce has a lot of gaps. The report from DHHS and Commerce focused on nursing, behavioral health, and direct care, saying these areas are the most urgent.

### **Spending in home care outpaces other healthcare sectors**

*McKnights Senior Living, by Kathleen Steele Gaivin; 2/2/24*

Spending in home healthcare outpaced other healthcare sectors in November, according to Altarum's monthly Health Sector Economic Indicators brief, released Wednesday. "In November 2023, year-over-year spending on home healthcare grew the fastest among major spending categories, at 12.9%," Altarum Fellow and Senior Researcher George Miller told the McKnight's Business Daily. ... Spending on nursing home care grew 7.9%; prescription drug 12.2%; dental services 5.8%; hospital care 5.9%; Overall, personal spending on healthcare goods and services was 7.3% in November, year over year.

### **When a spouse goes to the nursing home**

*The New York Times, by Paula Span; 2/5/24*

After moving his partner of 33 years to a memory care residence, Joseph Drolet, a retired lawyer in Atlanta, said his fear of what would happen to her if he died or became disabled has abated.



## **Colorado's paid leave program just launched. Here's why that's good for the state.**

*U.S. Department of Labor Blog, by Gayle Goldin; 2/5/24*

Today marks the 31st anniversary of the [Family and Medical Leave Act \(FMLA\)](#), landmark federal legislation that provides eligible workers unpaid, job-protected leave for specific family and medical reasons. ... But the FMLA is not enough. The lack of a [paid leave standard](#) means that many people cannot afford to take time away from work, even when they need it. That's why we're celebrating Colorado's new paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program (FAMLI), which began accepting applications on Jan. 1.

## **Cano Health files for bankruptcy, receives \$150-mln financing commitment**

*Reuters; 2/5/24*

Cano Health opens new tab filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware late on Sunday and said it entered into a restructuring support agreement to reduce debt and solicit potential offers, including the sale of the firm. Shares of the Miami-based company fell more than 50% before the bell. The primary care provider said it has received a commitment for \$150 million in new debtor-in-possession financing from some of its existing lenders, which is expected to provide sufficient liquidity to support its ongoing operations.

## **Non-print News**

### **New movie out today based on true story in Pinellas County**

*10 Tampa Bay; by Jenny Dean; 2/2/24*

CLEARWATER, Fla. — "Suncoast" is based on a teen girl coming of age while her brother is dying in hospice care. There's a new movie hitting theatres Friday and coming soon to Hulu based on a true story out of Pinellas County.

## **Today's Encouragement**

**The desire to reach for the stars is ambitious. The desire to reach hearts is wise. – Maya Angelou**

*Editor's Note: Hospice & Palliative Care Today honors Black History Month through our "Today's Encouragement" posts for February.*

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