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February 9th, 2024

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Headlines

Part 1, Latest updates from CMS Office of Minority Health: Rural-urban disparities in health care in Medicare

CMS Office of Minority Health (CMS OMH); released 2/7/24

The Rural-Urban Disparities in Health Care in Medicare report, which found rural Medicare Advantage beneficiaries fell below the national average of clinical care measures, such as Prevention and Screening, in the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) survey.

Part 2, Latest updates from CMS Office of Minority Health: Advancing health equity in rural, tribal, and geographically isolated communities FY2023 year in review

CMS Office of Minority Health (CMS OMH); released 2/7/24

The Advancing Health Equity in Rural, Tribal, and Geographically Isolated Communities FY2023 Year in Review report, which outlined the FY 2023 CMS actions and initiatives aimed to enhance health care access and quality for rural, tribal, and geographically isolated communities, including the CMS Health Equity

Framework and CMS Framework for Advancing Health Care in Rural, Tribal, and Geographically Isolated Communities.

From “high potential for abuse” to “accepted medical use”: Tracking developments and possible outcomes of federal cannabis rescheduling in the U.S.

JD Supra, by Jean Smith-Gonnell and Cole White; 2/7/24

Whether you believe that cannabis legalization has occurred too quickly or too slowly, one thing is certain: recent developments herald a potentially seismic shift in federal cannabis policy in the U.S. ... This article aims to catch readers up on the latest developments in federal cannabis legalization.



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Palliative Care Provider News

Inside agilon health’s palliative care game plan

Hospice News, by Jim Parker; 2/7/24

The senior care company agilon health ... will more than double the size of its palliative care program this year, with plans to leverage its robust suite of data to optimize care.

Palliative care reimbursement, innovation and reform

JD Supra - American Health Law Association, by Edo Banach; 2/7/24

Sections include:

- Palliative Care Defined
- Palliative Care In Action
- Palliative Care Innovation and Reform
 - Existing Flexibility
 - Innovation Models
- The Future of Palliative Care

Clinical News

Delivering effective messages in the patient-clinician encounter

JAMA, by Joseph N. Cappella, PhD and Richard L. Street Jr, PhD; 2/1/24

Effective communication between patient and clinician is a core function of the medical encounter. In a survey of cancer survivors, communication breakdowns most often identified by respondents were failures of information exchange, both in information provided by the clinician (eg, too complex, not enough) and in missing information from the patient or failing to elicit it. ... [A] Table provides specific examples of what clinicians can (and should not) do to accomplish [effective communication] goals.

Editor's Note: This article's Table with Goals and Strategies provides an exceptional education resource for hospice and palliative interdisciplinary orientation, continuing education, and competencies.



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Children to have a place to grieve: Shepherd's Cove Hospice plans musical-themed activity garden at Albertville facility

Sand Mountain - The Reporter, by Mary Bailey; 2/6/24

Shepherd's Cove Hospice is in the beginning stages of building a space where children can grieve and cope with loss on site at their facility. The "Shepherd's Cove Activity Garden" will be a place where children will be able to run, play and continue to be children while dealing with their emotions.

Regulatory News

Government warns Medicare Advantage insurers not to deny care based on AI

STAT, by Casey Ross and Bob Herman; 2/7/24

In recent months, the federal government has repeatedly told Medicare Advantage insurers that they cannot use artificial intelligence or algorithms to

deny medical services the government routinely covers. But in finalizing a rule to that effect, it also stepped into a thicket of questions from insurers about a technology that is especially difficult to pin down: What is AI? Can it be used at all to make decisions about the coverage of older patients? If so, how?

Publisher's note: Article may be behind paywall.

Medicare Advantage in the headlines: 9 recent updates

Becker's Payer Issues, by Rylee Wilson; 1/30/24

Challenges loom for Medicare Advantage in 2024, with payers reporting rising medical costs and lower growth expectations for the year. [Click on the title's link for] nine Medicare Advantage updates *Becker's* has reported since Jan. 22.



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Hospices & skilled nursing facilities: Report all managing employees

CMS: mInconnects; 2/8/24

CMS [recently clarified](#) that hospice and skilled nursing facility medical directors and administrators are always considered managing employees for Medicare provider enrollment purposes. You must report all current managing employees. If you haven't reported a medical director or administrator, report them now. See the [Medicare Program Integrity Manual: CY 2024 Home Health Prospective Payment System Updates \(PDF\)](#) MLN Matters Article for more information.

Concurrent Medicare hospice & curative care improves quality & reduces costs 13%

Open Minds; 2/7/24

Medicare beneficiaries with terminal health conditions who participated in the Medicare Care Choices Model (MCCM), received high quality care at a 13% lower cost compared to similar beneficiaries who did not receive the MCCM services. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) tested this new model as an option for Medicare beneficiaries to receive supportive care services while continuing to receive services for their terminal condition.

Publisher's note: Article may be behind paywall.

Medicare threatens to pull funding from HCA's embattled Mission Hospital

STAT, by Tara Bannow; 2/6/24

Five years after investor-owned HCA Healthcare took over an esteemed nonprofit hospital in North Carolina, Medicare is threatening to cut off payment for any services it provides seniors. The rare and dramatic move follows a Medicare revelation that patient safety is in "immediate jeopardy" at Mission Hospital in Asheville. That designation is the most severe the agency can hand out. HCA has just a few weeks to fix the problems or lose its Medicare funding.

Publisher's note: Article may be behind paywall.



Public Policy News

New paths could allow medical aid in dying for people with dementia

McKnight's Long-Term Care News, by Kristen Fischer; 2/7/24

A lot of people who have dementia want to use [medical aid in dying \(MAID\)](#) to end their lives before they lose their decision-making capacity and other abilities. This hasn't been allowed up until now but that could soon change, which could have implications for physicians, according to a new report.

85-year-old Arizona doctor arrested for allegedly aiding in New York suicide

NBC4 New York, by Jonathan Dienst; 2/6/24

An 85-year-old former doctor from Arizona is facing manslaughter charges for allegedly aiding in a suicide of a woman at a New York motel last year, according to authorities.

Medical assistance in dying bill draws large turnout

Concord Monitor, by Sruthi Gopalakrishnan; 2/7/24

People in wheelchairs, others relying on crutches, some facing terminal illness and some caregivers packed a hearing Wednesday for a bill that would allow medically assisted dying in New Hampshire. While most of the attendees expressed support for [House Bill 1283](#) to help those enduring pain during the final stages of life, Jonathan Eddinger, president of the state board of medicine, advocates for a shift in focus toward improving the ability to alleviate pain and suffering rather than making death an option to end such agony.

Post-Acute Care News

Senior living providers can tap into \$25 million grant to develop dementia-specific respite services

McKnights Senior Living, by Kimberly Bonvissuto; 2/7/24

Senior living operators who provide, or are considering providing, respite services for family caregivers of people living with [dementia](#) can apply for a piece of \$20 million in grant funding. The Alzheimer's Association will use a \$25 million, five-year grant award from the US Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Community Living to establish a new Center for Dementia Respite Innovation tasked with making respite services and service providers more dementia-capable.

Amedisys rolls out in-home testing to reduce hospitalizations

Modern Healthcare, by Diane Eastabrook; 2/8/24

Home health provider Amedisys said Thursday it will begin offering in-home molecular testing to patients that will help quickly identify urine, respiratory and wound infection pathogens.

CMS notifies HCA Mission Hospital of immediate jeopardy status

Becker's Clinical Leadership, by Erica Carbajal; 2/6/24

CMS has sent a letter to HCA's Mission Hospital in Asheville, N.C., to notify

leadership that the hospital is in immediate jeopardy and must take action to avert the loss of federal funding...

Study highlights financial burden of dementia on older adults, families

Georgia State University - School of Public Health, by Sam Fahmy; 2/7/24

A team of researchers from the Georgia State University School of Public Health, the University of Washington School of Pharmacy and the University of California San Francisco analyzed data from a national sample of more than 4,500 adults aged 70 and older to arrive at what are thought to be the first comparisons of out-of-pocket expenses by dementia status and care setting. The researchers found that the median adult with dementia in residential facilities such as assisted living centers spent 97% of their monthly income on long-term care. People with dementia in nursing homes spent nearly 83% of their monthly income on long-term care.

How Steward Health's relationship with private equity soured

Modern Healthcare, by Alex Kacik; 2/5/24

The financial decline of Steward Health Care may serve as a cautionary tale for health systems and other providers considering private equity investment.

General News

Humana eyes \$700M cuts amid \$541M loss

Modern Healthcare, by Nona Tepper; 1/25/24

Humana plans to trim \$700 million in administrative expenses after recording a disappointing fourth quarter and 2023, the company announced Thursday. The health insurer warned investors last week that medical costs exceeded expectations in 2023. On Thursday, the company disclosed that expenses were \$3 billion more than anticipated. Quarterly and annual earnings didn't meet projections amid rising costs and disadvantageous Medicare Advantage policies.

Other News

Recent hospital, health system CEO moves

Becker's Hospital Review; 2/8/24

Highlights CEO moves February 1-7, 2024

Executive personnel changes

- Heather Vida, new Executive Director of Ionia Area Hospice (MI)

Other Business Headlines of Interest, updated 2/8/24 per *nasdaq.com*

- Adus HomeCare (ADUS: \$88.91)
- Amedisys (AMED: \$93.37)

- BrightSpring Health (BTSG: \$11.51)
- Encompass (EHC: \$73.47)
- Enhabit (EHAB: \$8.76),cin
- Ensign Group (ENSG: \$117.29)
- HCA Healthcare (HCA: \$304.54)
- Humana (HUM: \$369.19)
- Pennant Group (PNTG: \$15.36)

- Vitas / Chemed Corp (CHE: \$591.80)

Today's Encouragement

Obstacles don't have to stop you. If you run into a wall, don't turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it. – Michael Jordan

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

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