

## Cordt Kassner

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## March 4th, 2024

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## Headlines

### **[Message from HHS about an ongoing active cybersecurity threat to your IT resources](#)**

*Email from CMS; 3/1/24*

Note: This joint Cybersecurity Advisory (CSA) is part of an ongoing #StopRansomware effort to publish advisories for network defenders that detail various ransomware variants and ransomware threat actors. These #StopRansomware advisories include recently and historically observed tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) and indicators of compromise (IOCs) to help organizations protect against ransomware. Visit [stopransomware.gov](https://stopransomware.gov) to see all #StopRansomware advisories and to learn more about other ransomware threats and no-cost resources.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

are releasing this joint CSA to disseminate known IOCs and TTPs associated with the ALPHV Blackcat ransomware as a service (RaaS) identified through FBI investigations as recently as February 2024.

## **Double your cybersecurity spending, CIO warns amid Change Healthcare attack**

*Becker's Health IT, by Naomi Diaz; 2/29/24*

What does the Change Healthcare ransomware incident mean for healthcare organizations? Doubling your cybersecurity spending, [according](#) to one health system CIO. Will Weider, CIO and senior vice president of Wausau, WI-based Aspirus Health, shared five thoughts on LinkedIn Feb. 29 about the incident, saying, "Whatever you planned to spend to improve cybersecurity, double it." Additionally, Mr. Weider stated that in light of this incident, healthcare organizations should: ...

## **Hospice Provider News**

### **Staffing, capacity gains 'catapult' growth at VITAS**

*Hospice News, by Jim Parker; 2/28/24*

Capacity gains driven by a slate of new hires has propelled VITAS Healthcare to pre-pandemic performance. A bonus program implemented last year has accelerated hiring, which in turn has relieved some of the capacity constraints that have been a stumbling block for several quarters running. The initiative included a one-time retention payment that ranges from \$2,000 to \$15,000 per employee for nurses, nurse managers, home health aides and social workers.



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### **Home Health & Hospice secures over \$1 million in grants for innovative health care initiatives**

*VB VermontBiz, by The University of Vermont Health Network Home-Health & Hospice; 2/29/24*

Home Health & Hospice (HHH) is pleased to announce the receipt of two grants from the Vermont Agency of Human Services, totaling \$1.18 million. Vermont received funding through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 to enhance, expand, and strengthen home and community-based services (HCBS) and allocated a portion of those funds to offer grants to HCBS providers that serve Medicaid members.

### **'Playbook' offers strategies for home health, hospice firms to jump into value-based care**

*McKnight's Home Care, by Adam Healy; 2/28/24*

Don't drag your feet. As entities like Medicare Advantage and Accountable Care Organizations continue to grow and thrive, the time is now for home care to step into value-based care, according to home care consultants at Transcend Strategy Group. "The next two or three years are going to be very critical," Tony Kudner, chief strategy officer at healthcare consultancy firm Transcend Strategy Group, said in an interview Tuesday with *McKnight's Home Care Daily Pulse*. "Now is the time to build out the larger organizational competencies that value-based care is going to require."

### **Aspirus Health completes St. Luke's Duluth acquisition**

*Modern Healthcare, by Alex Kacik; 3/1/24*

Aspirus Health finalized its acquisition of St. Luke's Duluth, forming a 19-hospital system spanning northeastern Minnesota, northern and central Wisconsin and Michigan's Upper Peninsula. ... As part of the [transaction](#), Aspirus will invest at least \$300 million over eight years in St. Luke's and will expand its health plan to St. Luke's service area within two years. In addition, Aspirus will honor all physician, labor and union contracts, the system said in a news release Friday.

*Editor's Note: Both Aspirus Health and St. Luke's Duluth provide hospice care.*



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**Clinical News**

## ***Perceptions of interprofessional practitioners regarding pediatric palliative transports***

*Am J Crit Care; by Harriett Swasey, Diana Morrill, Sandra Mott, Shannon Engstrand, and Jean Anne Connor; 3/1/24*

*Background: Pediatric palliative transport (PPT) is the practice of offering critically and terminally ill children requiring life-sustaining measures the opportunity to be discharged from the hospital to home or a hospice facility for end-of-life care.*

*Although studies have shown PPT to favorably affect both children and their families, limited research exists on the perspectives of health care practitioners.*

## **Regulatory News**

### ***CMS upends Medicare Advantage supplemental benefits data reporting for payers***

*DLA Piper, by David Kopans and Sua Yoon; 2/27/24*

*On February 21, 2024, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued new guidance via a memorandum to Medicare Advantage (MA) organizations, Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) organizations, and Demonstration*

*Organizations (collectively, Plans) that upends how these Plans have been reporting (or not reporting) encounter information for their covered supplemental benefits. The guidance in the memorandum is effective retroactively to January 1, 2024. [In this article] is a Q &A explaining the top points of the guidance and highlight its impact on companies across industries.*

### ***What the UnitedHealth Group Antitrust Investigation means for Amedisys, home health industry***

*Home Health Care News, by Andrew Donlan; 3/1/24*

*Since the news surfaced Tuesday that the Department of Justice had opened an antitrust investigation into UnitedHealth Group (NYSE: UNH), additional questions have bubbled up. Namely, those questions surround the home health provider Amedisys Inc. (Nasdaq: AMED), which agreed to be acquired by UnitedHealth Group's Optum in June of last year.*



## **Public Policy News**

### ***Minnesota's ethical dilemma: Assisted suicide debate intensifies amid disability concerns***

*BNN, by Waqas Arain; 2/28/24*

*Discover the complex narratives and ethical dilemmas surrounding Minnesota's proposed End-of-Life Option Act, as advocates and opponents clash over the autonomy of terminally ill patients and the potential risks to vulnerable groups.*

### ***Rhode Island: Physician-assisted suicide bill reintroduced in state legislature***

*The Brown Daily Herald, by Maya Kelly; 3/1/24*

*House Bill 7100 would legalize prescription of lethal medications to patients with less than six months to live. ... [Read this article for more history.] ... Joan Teno, an adjunct professor of health services, policy and practice, noted that medical professionals are "strictly protected" by the bill: if a healthcare provider does not wish to prescribe a lethal medication, they are under no obligation to do so. Physicians are also immune from accusations of unprofessional conduct as long as the patient meets all requirements.*

### ***Revolutionizing healthcare: New legislative measures reshape services and access in 2023***

*BNN, by Israel Ojoko; 2/28/24*

*[Oklahoma Senate] Recent legislative actions have significantly altered the healthcare landscape, addressing issues in hospice care, long-term care training, pharmacy services, physician licensure, Medicaid, and substance abuse services.*



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## **Mergers & Aquisition News**

### ***Frontpoint Health acquires High Plains Senior Care, expanding Texas footprint and Medicare Advantage partnerships***

*BNN, by Salman Akhtar; 2/29/24*

*Frontpoint Health, a leader in Home Health and Hospice services, has officially acquired High Plains Senior Care Group (HPSC), marking a significant expansion into over 176 counties across Texas. This strategic move not only broadens Frontpoint's geographical reach but also strengthens its collaborations with Medicare Advantage plans in the Southeast, promising accelerated growth and enhanced care for Medicare Advantage patients.*

### ***IntellaTriage strengthens position as market leader through NurseLine acquisition***

*FOX WTNZ TV 43; 2/29/24*

*IntellaTriage, the leading provider of after-hours nurse-first triage services for hospice and home health, is excited to announce its strategic acquisition of NurseLine, a prominent nationwide provider of hospice and home health triage services. The transaction was completed for an undisclosed sum and marks a significant step in IntellaTriage's commitment to enhancing patient care and streamlining healthcare delivery.*

## **Post-Acute Care News**

### ***3 predictions for the future of post-acute care***

*Becker's Hospital Review, by Mariah Taylor; 2/28/24*

*Robust in-home care, advances in technology and seamless access to nursing facilities*



are some of the ways leaders anticipate post-acute care may change in the next 50 years. Here, three leaders give their predictions and hopes for the industry in the future.

## **Technology / Innovations News**

### **[The ransomware groups targeting healthcare](#)**

*Becker's Health IT, by Naomi Diaz; 2/29/24*

*Russia-based ransomware gang ALPHV/Blackcat, aka BlackCat, has made headlines due to its attack on Change Healthcare, but the group has been targeting healthcare for a while. "This group in particular has been very aggressive targeting healthcare and has been responsible for numerous high-impact attacks," John Riggi, the American Hospital Association's national adviser for cybersecurity and risk, told Becker's. BlackCat, which uses a ransomware-as-a-service model, is known as the "second most prolific ransomware-as-a-service variant in the world," [according](#) to the Justice Department.*

## **General News**

### **[Elevate Podcast Episode #32: Domestic violence, abuse, trauma in hospice](#)**

*Hospice News, by Mick Stahlberg; 2/28/24*

*This episode features a discussion about the ways that pervasive experiences of domestic violence, abuse and trauma affect hospice and palliative care patients. Hospice News Reporter Holly Vossel speaks with Carole Fisher, president of the National Partnership for Healthcare and Hospice Innovation (NPHI), and Dr. Cameron Muir, chief innovation officer at NPHI, about the different ways hospices can shape their trauma-informed care delivery approaches.*

### **[Joyce Slocum, Texas Public Radio president and CEO, in hospice care](#)**

*Texas Public Radio, by TPR Staff; 3/1/24*

*Joyce Slocum, TPR's president and CEO, was hospitalized this week due to complications from colon cancer. In a statement on Thursday, TPR and Slocum's family added that she has transitioned to hospice care. "TPR must share the difficult news that President & CEO, Joyce Slocum, was hospitalized this weekend due to complications from a recurrence of her colon cancer, and has now transitioned to hospice care," the statement read. "Her family and the TPR staff are grateful for the outpouring of support and love for Joyce."*



### ***Ziggy Marley recalls dad Bob Marley's last words to him before his death***

NBC News TV 10 Boston; by Randi Richardson; 2/28/24, updated 2/29/24

*Ziggy Marley was 12 years old when his father, Bob Marley, died, and he cherishes their last memory together. ... He recalled being in his dad's intensive care hospital room a few days before the singer died from malignant melanoma. "I was, like, peeping through the window," Ziggy Marley, now 55, said. "And he was like, 'Come here.' So, I went in, and he was like, 'Hey ... well, young Bob, I have a song for you.' And he said these words: 'On your way up, take me up. On your way down, don't let me down.'"*

## **Non-print News**

### ***Podcast: Dr. Robert Carolla's reflections on life and mortality***

Springfield Daily Citizen; 2/28/24

*Dr. Carolla, a pioneer in his field, sheds light on the delicate balance between life and mortality that oncologists navigate daily. Through his work with the Hospice Foundation of the Ozarks and national recognition from StoryCorps broadcasts, he and his wife, Peg, have touched countless lives with their compassion and dedication. Dr. Carolla's journey offers a profound perspective shift on life, death, grief and the human experience.*

## **Other News**

### ***The unique perspectives of healthcare leaders under 40***

Becker's Hospital Review, by Kelly Gooch; 2/2024

*Becker's asked some of our "rising stars" under 40 to answer the following question: As a young leader in healthcare, what unique perspectives or approaches do you bring to your role that you believe are particularly valuable in driving innovation and addressing the evolving needs of patients and healthcare providers?*

## **Today's Encouragement**

***Sometimes the smallest step in the right direction ends up being the biggest step of your life. Tiptoe if you must, but take a step. - Naeem Callaway***

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