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**HOSPICE &
PALLIATIVE CARE
TODAY**

March 5th, 2024

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Headlines

The Future of the Hospice Benefit Component of the Value-Based Insurance Design (VBID) Model

CMS website; 3/4/24

Beginning in Calendar Year (CY) 2021, the Value-Based Insurance Design (VBID) Model allowed participating Medicare Advantage Organizations (MAOs) to include the Medicare hospice benefit in their Medicare Advantage (MA) benefits package, herein known as the Hospice Benefit Component. After carefully considering recent feedback about the increasing operational challenges of the Hospice Benefit Component and limited and decreasing participation among MAOs that may impact a thorough evaluation, CMS has decided to conclude the Hospice Benefit Component as of December 31, 2024, 11:59 PM. CMS will not

accept applications to the previously released CY 2025 Request for Applications for the Hospice Benefit Component of the VBID Model.

Why health care has become a top target for cybercriminals

The Mercury News, by Elise Takahama of The Seattle Times; 3/1/24, updated 3/2/24
Cyberattacks of all sorts have plagued large corporations, small businesses and individuals for decades now, but in the past several years, health care has become a top target, according to federal and local cybersecurity experts. ...
[Click on the title to read more about ...]

- Anatomy of a cyberattack
- Push toward cyber safety
- Catching a cybercriminal
- Staying safer online

Hospice Provider News

Hospice of the Chesapeake appoints new CEO

The Southern Maryland Chronicle, by David M. Higgins II; 3/1/24

Rebecca Miller has been appointed as the President and Chief Executive Officer of Hospice of the Chesapeake, a prominent not-for-profit organization dedicated to providing end-of-life care.



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Premier Hospice Phoenix exits Medicare program, impacting local healthcare

BNN, by Mazhar Abbas; 3/4/24

Premier Hospice in Phoenix ends its Medicare agreement, sparking concerns among patients and providers. Explore the impact and future of hospice care.

Profits at hospice firm VITAS soar by whopping nearly 88 percent in Q4

McKnights Home Care, by Adam Healy; 2/29/24

Hospice firm VITAS, a subsidiary of Chemed, enjoyed a stellar fourth quarter as profits rose by nearly 88% to reach \$63 million. It helped to buoy Chemed's overall earnings as the parent company's other subsidiary, plumbing subsidiary Roto-Rooter, struggled with weaker profits and sales.

Palliative Care Provider News

Palliative care gets spotlight in assisted dying report

Nursing Times, by Edd Church; 3/1/24

A debate around assisted dying has brought hospices into the spotlight, as a new report on the matter has been published.



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Obstacles and opportunities for palliative care in the ICU

Palliative Care News, by Rachel Edwards; 3/1/24

A growing body of research touts the benefits of palliative care for patients, families, and even providers. However, when evaluated through randomized clinical trials, the results tend to lean toward mediocre. Palliative Care News spoke with experts in the field to unpack the reasons behind those results and identify the obstacles that are getting in the way of a more effective approach.

Clinical News

MMJ.com expands access to Medical Marijuana cards across 26 states in the US

Newsfile Corp., 3/1/24

In a significant development for healthcare and legal access to medical marijuana in the United States, [MMJ.com](https://www.mmj.com) has announced its expansion to offer services across 26 states. This initiative represents a pivotal moment in the ongoing effort to provide patients with legal, safe, and convenient access to

medical marijuana, reflecting changing societal attitudes and advancements in telehealth.

How will Kentucky's medical marijuana program be regulated? Here's where things stand

Louisville Courier Journal, by Olivia Evans; 3/4/24

The Kentucky Medical Cannabis Program — which regulates the legal cultivation, production, sale and use of medical marijuana products — is set to officially start Jan. 1, 2025. ... In early January, Gov. Beshear's administration filed its first set of 10 regulations governing the industry and providing a framework for how businesses will operate. ... The 10 regulations focus on cultivators, processors, producers, safety compliance facilities, dispensaries and more. ... According to the website for the state medical cannabis program, the cabinet is in the process of developing additional regulations.



Could Kansas adopt medical cannabis pilot program? Legislation in the works

Kansas News, by Rebekah Chung; 3/1/24

Medical marijuana advocates are crafting proposals for this session. Nexstar's Kansas Capitol Bureau confirmed that a medical cannabis pilot program proposal is in the works. The future of marijuana reform lies in the Kansas Senate's hands, as the House awaits action.

Regulatory News

Home health disparities: Medicare Advantage patients receive fewer visits, worse outcomes

Home Health Care News, by Patirck Filbin; 3/1/24

Home health patients under Medicare Advantage (MA) plans have worse functional outcomes compared to traditional Medicare patients, likely as a result of receiving fewer visits, according to a new study.

Medicare’s new Dementia GUIDE Model: How can physicians, hospices, and home health agencies participate?

Morgan Lewis Blog Post; 3/1/24

If you have had a loved one suffer from dementia, you know the emotional, physical, and financial toll of this terrible disease. With advancements in dementia treatment, however, there is renewed hope on addressing this disease and increasing emphasis on fostering innovative care models. A central pillar of this effort is the Guiding an Improved Dementia Experience (GUIDE) model, announced by the US Department of Health and Human Service’s Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) in July 2023. This initiative—a new voluntary, nationwide alternative payment model—is designed to support Medicare beneficiaries with dementia, as well as their caregivers.



Public Policy News

Maryland: Medical aid-in-dying legislation won’t pass this year

The Baltimore Banner, by Pamela Wood; 3/1/24

The Maryland General Assembly will not vote this year on a bill that would allow terminally ill residents to be prescribed medication they could take to initiate their own death. Versions of the proposal have been considered, but not passed, in Maryland since 2015.

What is the appropriate response when a colleague is not following an aid-in-dying law?

American Clinicians Academy on Medical Aid in Dying - Ethics Consultation Service; posted by Jean Abbott, MD, MH; originally posted 2/2/24 and emailed 3/4/24

Outline of Ethics Question: A resource practitioner for aid-in-dying care has encountered practitioners who have not followed the requirements of the laws in that state, including eligibility, documentation, and other standard legal or medical elements of aid-in-dying care. The resource practitioner wonders what ethical responsibilities should guide their response to these concerns. Definition of "resource practitioner": An experienced prescriber who acts as a source of information or a mentor for others prescribing or consulting for patients considering aid in dying. Their role is to advise the provider on aid-in-dying best medical practices and the process required to comply with the law.

Colorado's medical aid-in-dying residency requirement won't be lifted

The Colorado Sun, by Jesse Paul; 3/1/24

Out-of-state residents will continue to be prohibited from receiving medical aid in dying in Colorado after a bill aimed at loosening the regulations for terminally ill people seeking to end their lives was pared back Thursday evening. Senate Bill 68 was also changed to shrink the waiting period for people seeking medical aid in dying to seven days from 15, with the possibility to eliminate the waiting period for people who may not have 48 hours to live.

Congress floats Medicare physician pay bump: 4 notes

Becker's Hospital CFO Report, by Mackenzie Bean; 3/4/24

Physicians are set to receive a 1.7% increase in Medicare pay effective March 9 as part of a \$460 billion spending package congressional leaders released this weekend. Four things to know: ... [click on the title's link for more]

Post-Acute Care News

Opinion: How death can be the chance to serve others

WAtoday, by Annie Whitlock; 3/3/24

I see my death as an opportunity to serve others A few years ago, I offered my corpse to the department of anatomy and physiology at the University of Melbourne. The university co-ordinates a body donor program for the purposes of anatomical examination and the precious teaching and study of anatomy to its medical students. ... To the medical students who will be learning from my body I gave the department the following letter: *I give you my body. ... Learn from me this*

one last time. So my organs, flesh and scars tell of times and outcomes that in death I cannot utter any more. ...

Technology / Innovations News

Change Healthcare's temporary funding program 'not even a Band-Aid,' AHA says

Becker's Health IT, by Giles Bruce; 3/4/24

The American Hospital Association called Change Healthcare's temporary funding program for providers affected by the cyberattack on the UnitedHealth Group subsidiary inadequate, while a U.S. Senate leader asked CMS to speed up payments to hospitals. Change Healthcare [set up](#) the funding assistance March 1 for providers [facing](#) cash-flow issues after losing access to its payer systems, which have been down since the Feb. 21 ransomware attack. However, AHA President and CEO Rick Pollack wrote in a March 4 [letter](#) to UnitedHealth Group that the program is "not even a Band-Aid on the payment problems you identify."

Change Healthcare outage: AHA slams UnitedHealth funding program

Modern Healthcare - Cybersecurity, by Lauren Berryman; 3/4/2024

The American Hospital Association slammed UnitedHealth Group's offer of financial assistance for some healthcare providers in the wake of the cyberattack on Change Healthcare and called on Congress for assistance. AHA President and CEO Richard Pollack said Change Healthcare parent company UnitedHealth Group's temporary loan program misses the mark in a letter sent Monday to UnitedHealth Group President and Chief Operating Officer Dirk McMahon. Pollack criticized the initiative for what he described as its limited eligibility criteria and unfair contract terms and conditions.

Pharmacy associations join forces to advocate for pharmacists during change healthcare outage

Newswire Press Release; 3/3/24

Association executives from the American Pharmacists Association (APhA), the National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA), the National Alliance of State Pharmacy Associations (NASPA), and the American Society of Consultant Pharmacists (ASCP) released an open letter to pharmacy benefit manager (PBM) executives and other insurance payers whose systems may have been impacted

by the Change Healthcare outage. Pharmacists and pharmacies are asking for assurances that claims fulfilled during this outage will be paid, and paid in a timely manner, considering the challenges faced by pharmacies and pharmacists with predicting co-payments and determining eligibility and coverage.

General News

At Frieze LA, Gary Tyler finds resilience after prison—in each stitch of his poignant quilts

ARTnews, by Steven Vargas; 2/29/24

Los Angeles–based artist Gary Tyler has been making quilts for close to 15 years but has yet to exhibit them in his hometown. This week, he will debut several of his intricate and emotionally packed pieces at Frieze Los Angeles, after having been named the winner of the fair’s Impact Prize. His quilts document the 42 years he spent in prison following a wrongful conviction of murder at age 17. His journey to receiving the prize may be unconventional, but for him, it is a reminder of the resilience of an artist.

Publisher's note: This article features another quilter from the Angola Prison Hospice Project.

Contract CNA staffing associated with worse care quality outcomes: study

McKnights Senior Living, by Kathleen Steele Gaivin; 3/1/24

Nursing homes that use contract staffing to fill certified nursing assistant position vacancies are more likely to experience worse care quality than those that do not, according to the results of a [study](#) by PHI. The proportion of total CNA hours filled by contract CNAs in SNFs increased from 2% in 2017 to 11% in 2022, the study found.

APRNs, home health / personal care aides top healthcare careers in 2024

McKnights Senior Living, by Kathleen Steele Gaivin; 2/28/24

Advanced practice registered nurses and home health and personal care aides lead the list of top healthcare careers in 2024, according to a [study](#) from digital healthcare platform Tebra. The researchers compared 46 healthcare industry jobs by median pay, 10-year outlook and expected job growth, employment per 10,000 workers and web search volume, using data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Census Bureau. ... Among all healthcare occupations included in the study, ones in home care had the highest employment rate.

Man's dying wish was to see newest 'Dune' film. Director made it happen before release

Global News, by Alessia Simona Maratta; 3/4/24

A palliative care patient's end-of-life wish was to see the second installment of Denis Villeneuve's *Dune* before he passed. The Quebec filmmaker and his team rushed to make it happen almost two months before the film's premiere and just days before the man died.

Today's Encouragement

It was one of those March days when the sun shines hot and the wind blows cold: when it is summer in the light, and winter in the shade. - Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*

Editor's Note: This aptly describes the extreme, co-existing weather patterns our readers are experiencing, from USA heat waves to blizzards. Likewise, this paints a vivid image of co-existing, opposite views throughout our hospice and palliative care field, e.g. Medical Aid In Dying (MAID), Artificial Intelligence (AI), medical marijuana, for profit / non profit, and more.

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