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**HOSPICE &
PALLIATIVE CARE
TODAY**

March 6th, 2024

Contents

- [1. Hackers behind Change Healthcare breach get \\$22M](#)
- [2. Federal Trade Commission, the Department of Justice Department and the Department of Health and Human Services launch cross-government inquiry on impact of corporate greed in health care](#)
- [3. Hittin' the Road for Hospice: Annual motorcycle ride raises \\$22,000 for Gulfside Hospice patients and their families](#)
- [4. Cornhole tournament raises \\$33K for Chatham-Kent Hospice](#)
- [5. Revolutionizing Elderly Care: Palliative Care's growth and integration into Value-Based Models](#)
- [6. The current state of community-based palliative care](#)
- [7. Primary care physician's next frontier: Palliative care](#)
- [8. Editorial: Illness trajectories in the age of big data](#)
- [9. Creating comfort through communication: Strategies for supporting mental wellbeing in palliative care](#)

10. [Hospice launches Mothers Day tribute page](#)
11. [Veterans' care new battleground in nursing home staffing mandate](#)
12. [The top strategies healthcare organizations can use to reduce denials](#)
13. [Coverage denials in Medicare Advantage—Balancing access and efficiency](#)
14. [A whistleblower lawsuit cost ChristianaCare \\$47M. Why are whistleblower cases increasing?](#)
15. [Providers meet with OMB to prevent 'devastating' effect of 80/20 provision](#)
16. [Bill to legalize medical aid in dying fails to advance in General Assembly, won't become law in 2024](#)
17. [Ounce of prevention: Is a selling hospice or home health agency ready for the 36-Month Rule?](#)
18. [Scientists reveal that nearly all older Americans follow one of nine trajectories in their last three years of life](#)
19. [InnovAge launches first PACE Center in Florida providing comprehensive healthcare program for seniors to promote independence](#)
20. [Home care nurse strike ends without deal](#)
21. [Physicians grow louder on noncompetes](#)
22. [What is Sustainable Health Care Design?](#)
23. [The framework on palliative care in Canada - five years later: a report on the state of palliative care in Canada.](#)
24. [15 C-level job openings with HCA](#)
25. [Today's Encouragement: Be yourself ...](#)

Headlines

Hackers behind Change Healthcare breach get \$22M

Becker's Health IT, by Laura Dyrda; 3/5/24

The cybercriminal organization responsible for hacking UnitedHealth Group's Change Healthcare has received a multimillion dollar payment in bitcoins, according to *Reuters*. UnitedHealth Group said Change was [hit](#) by BlackCat ransomware group Feb. 21, forcing its systems offline. The claims processing and revenue cycle management platform is still working to restore functionality, and asked health systems to use alternative methods for claims processing while its systems are down. BlackCat claimed it stole 6 terabytes of data from Change, including medical records and Social Security numbers.

Hospice Provider News

Federal Trade Commission, the Department of Justice Department and the Department of Health and Human Services launch cross-government inquiry on impact of corporate greed in health care

Federal Trade Commission; 3/5/24

The Federal Trade Commission, the Department of Justice's (DOJ) Antitrust Division, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) jointly launched a cross-government public inquiry into private-equity and other corporations' increasing control over health care. ... The agencies seek comments on a variety of transactions, including those involving dialysis clinics, nursing homes, hospice providers, primary care providers, hospitals, home health agencies, home- and community-based services providers, behavioral health providers, as well as billing and collections services.

Hittin' the Road for Hospice: Annual motorcycle ride raises \$22,000 for Gulfside Hospice patients and their families

The Laker / Lutz News; by Mary Rathman; 3/5/24

[Scroll down on the page for the article] For more than a decade, motorcycle riders have been coming together to raise funds for Gulfside Hospice and support patients in need and their families. During the 12th annual Hittin' the Road for Hospice, the crowd raised just over \$22,000 for the nonprofit, according to a news release.



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Cornhole tournament raises \$33K for Chatham-Kent Hospice

CK News Today, by Millar Hill; 3/4/24

The Chatham-Kent Hospice Foundation's inaugural cornhole tournament was a success, raising over \$33,000 for end-of-life care in Chatham-Kent. The event, which took place Saturday at the Everest Convention Centre in Chatham, saw 28 teams take part who wanted to help raise some funds.

Editor's Note: Who would have thought that cornhole could raise so much money? With its growing popularity in the US, consider incorporating a revenue-generating

cornhole area into your standard (appropriate) fundraisers. Are you hosting a golf tournament? Consider including an intergenerational, family/team oriented cornhole contest for family, friends, and community groups.

Palliative Care Provider News

Revolutionizing Elderly Care: Palliative Care's growth and integration into Value-Based Models

BNN, by Olalekan Adigun; 3/5/24

Amid the rapidly evolving landscape of healthcare, palliative care is undergoing a significant transformation, marking a new era in the management and delivery of healthcare services to the elderly. Dr. Jason Black, a seasoned family medicine practitioner with a specialized fellowship in geriatrics, is at the forefront of this change. Working for Gilchrist, a hospice and palliative care organization in Baltimore and central Maryland, Dr. Black embodies the integration of palliative care into the broader healthcare framework, emphasizing value-based care models.

The current state of community-based palliative care

Hospice News, by Jim Parker; 3/4/24

"Palliative care" is becoming a buzz word in health care, even if many people don't understand the loosely defined term. However, wide variation exists in how different providers deliver these services in the absence of a standardized, national definition or a more concrete regulatory structure that includes quality measures, Logan Hoover, vice president of policy and public relations for the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO), said at the Hospice News Palliative Care Conference in Tampa, Florida.



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Primary care physician's next frontier: Palliative care

Medscape, by Larry Beresford; 3/5/24

Palliative care, a medical specialty that focuses on clarifying the treatment goals of seriously ill patients, helping with end-of-life planning, and emphasizing pain and symptom management, has been growing in recent years. Already well-established in most US hospitals, it is also expanding in community settings, often as an extension of hospice programs. Now, by adding primary care physicians and practices to their service mix, palliative care groups are better meeting the needs of a neglected — and costly — population of frail elders.

Editorial: Illness trajectories in the age of big data

The BMJ; by Peter Tanuseputro, Colleen Webber, and James Downar; 3/1/24

For decades, healthcare providers have understood that patients follow typical trajectories of health decline as they approach the end of life, and they have used this understanding to help patients and families anticipate the dying process. Traditional trajectories focus on function or overall health status and include sudden death, terminal illness ..., organ failure ..., and frailty ... Two Education articles in the *BMJ* add novel dimensions to our understanding of health decline. Murray et al explain how declines in function do not always mirror declines in social, psychological, and spiritual dimensions. They also add a new trajectory, multimorbidity, to describe a person with conditions from multiple trajectories (such as heart disease from organ failure and cognitive impairment from frailty).

Clinical News

Creating comfort through communication: Strategies for supporting mental wellbeing in palliative care

WorldHealth.net; 3/4/24

... To provide comprehensive and compassionate care, this article explores the various strategies for communicating and supporting mental well-being in palliative care.

1. Active Listening and Validation
2. Building Trust through Transparency and Honesty
3. Emotional Intelligence in Care Delivery
4. Discussing Difficult Topics with Sensitivity
5. Encouraging Patient Autonomy
6. Non-Verbal Communication

7. Supporting Caregivers
8. Utilizing Technology
9. Tailoring Strategies to Individual Needs



Hospice launches Mothers Day tribute page

Newrie.ie; 3/3/24

Southern Area Hospice has launched an online tribute page ahead of Mother's Day, providing a platform for individuals to remember their mothers, grandmothers, and mother figures who have passed away. Visitors to the Mother's Day online tribute page can leave messages, share stories, and upload photographs of their loved ones. The page also allows individuals to read other dedications, fostering a sense of community and remembrance.

Veterans' care new battleground in nursing home staffing mandate

McKnights Long-Term Care News, by Kimberly Marselas; 3/5/24

Two senators have introduced a bill to determine exactly what "unintended circumstances" could result for elderly veterans if a federal rule mandating staffing levels at all US nursing homes is allowed to proceed. ... The bill would require the VA to study potential risks associated with the proposed Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services rule — especially as they pertain to rural providers. The senators said the proposal would "unsustainably change staffing ratios at nursing homes."

Regulatory News

The top strategies healthcare organizations can use to reduce denials

MedCityNews, by Laxmi Patel; 3/5/24

Here are six actionable steps healthcare organizations can take to reduce their likelihood of denials and write-offs.

1. Enhanced registration and pre-authorization process
2. Accurate and timely documentation
3. Claim scrubbing and validation
4. Data analysis for denial trend analysis
5. Comprehensive training and education for staff
6. Collaboration with payers



Coverage denials in Medicare Advantage—Balancing access and efficiency

JAMA Health Forum; by Suhas Gondi, MD, MBA; Kushal T. Kadakia, MSc; and Thomas C. Tsai, MD, MPH; 3/1/24

Each year, millions of claims for medical services are denied by health insurance plans. Many denials may be justified as a necessary strategy to reduce wasteful spending from low-value care. However, denials may also delay diagnosis and/or treatment for patients, and appealing denials contributes to clinician workload and burnout. This tension is apparent in the Medicare program, where denials affect millions of beneficiaries who enroll in Medicare Advantage (MA).

A whistleblower lawsuit cost ChristianaCare \$47M. Why are whistleblower cases increasing?

Delaware Online, by Esteban Parra and Xerxes Wilson; 3/4/24

A former medical director specializing in neurosurgery at southern Delaware's largest health care provider claims in a lawsuit that Bayhealth Medical Center misclassified "brain-dead" patients in order to overbill for services. ... [The whistleblower reported that] hospital officials discussed a "new hospital

initiative" in which suspected "brain-dead" patients would be discharged and admitted to hospice before any declaration of brain death, according to the lawsuit. The scheme allowed for prolonged billing where previous billing ended with the patient's death, the complaint states. [Please refer to the article for details.]

Providers meet with OMB to prevent 'devastating' effect of 80/20 provision

McKnights Home Care, by Adam Healy; 3/4/24

Home care stakeholders have been busy on Capitol Hill voicing concerns about a controversial provision of the proposed Medicaid Access Rule. The National Association for Home Care & Hospice and Home Care Association of America met with the Office of Management and Budget last week to discuss the Access Rule's so-called 80/20 provision. The provision, if finalized, would require that 80% of Medicaid payments for personal care, home health and homemaker services be spent on workers' compensation. "If that one provision is finalized as proposed, it would be so detrimental that we'd likely lose a significant portion of our service delivery base and people would go without care," Damon Terzaghi, NAHC's director of Medicaid HCBS (home- and community-based services) said in an interview with *McKnight's Home Care Daily Pulse*. "It would truly be devastating."

Public Policy News

Bill to legalize medical aid in dying fails to advance in General Assembly, won't become law in 2024

ABC News 8, Richmond, VA; by Tyler Englander; 3/4/24

A bill to allow terminally ill patients to ask for physician-assisted death, or "medical aid in dying," failed to pass a House committee on Monday, meaning it won't become law in 2024. The House Courts of Justice Committee agreed to continue Senate Bill 280 to 2025, ending its chances of final passage in this year's session.

Mergers & Aquisition News

Ounce of prevention: Is a selling hospice or home health agency ready for the 36-Month Rule?

McGuire Woods; 3/4/24

Medicare-enrolled hospices and HHAs should take the following steps to assess and avoid triggering the 36-month rule: [click on the link for content]

Post-Acute Care News

Scientists reveal that nearly all older Americans follow one of nine trajectories in their last three years of life

SciTechDaily, by Rutgers University; 3/2/24

A Rutgers Health analysis of millions of Medicare records has laid the groundwork for improving end-of-life care by demonstrating that nearly all older Americans follow one of nine trajectories in their last three years of life. "Identifying which paths people actually take is a necessary precursor to identifying which factors send different people down different paths and designing interventions that send more people down whatever path is right for them," said Olga Jarrín, the Hunterdon Professor of Nursing Research at Rutgers and corresponding author of the study published in *BMC Geriatrics*.

InnovAge launches first PACE Center in Florida providing comprehensive healthcare program for seniors to promote independence

MarketScreener, Globe Newswire; 3/4/24

InnovAge Holding Corp. ("InnovAge") (Nasdaq: INNV), the industry leader in providing comprehensive healthcare programs to dual-eligible seniors through the Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) launched a new center in Tampa, its first in the state of Florida. This PACE center has the capacity to serve approximately 1,300 participants.

General News

Home care nurse strike ends without deal

Northwest Labor Press, by Mallory Gruben; 3/1/24

Usually, PeaceHealth jointly bargains with the home health unit and a unit of about 1,500 hospital nurses, and all nurses are paid the same. But for this round of negotiations, PeaceHealth demanded that bargaining happen separately. Hospital nurses reached an agreement in August that raises wages 20.5% over four years. PeaceHealth's latest offer to the home health nurses is a 14.75% raise over four years. [Erin] Grace [a nurse,] says without an equal contract for equal work, PeaceHealth will have difficulty attracting and retaining home care nurses.

According to ONA, the unit has already lost a quarter of its members, and more say they plan to leave if a contract isn't reached soon.

Physicians grow louder on noncompetes

Becker's Hospital Review, by Ashleigh Hollowell; 3/4/24

Amid a nationwide shortage of physicians, contractual noncompete clauses are making it more challenging for patients to receive the care they need, particularly in more rural regions, and physicians are pushing back, *NBC News* reported March 3. The American Medical Association estimates that between 35% and 45% of physicians in the U.S. are bound by noncompete clauses of some kind.

What is Sustainable Health Care Design?

gb&d; by Andrew Biro; 3/4/24

Improving the sustainability of our health care facilities is not only imperative to addressing climate change, but it also helps create healthier, more productive societies that are better suited to providing accessible, equitable health care to all persons. These are the basics of sustainable health care design, including strategies for implementation, metrics for measuring sustainability, and a few examples of successful, sustainable health care projects from around the country.

Editor's Note: This article features a photo from The Jack Byrne Center for Palliative & Hospice Care in Lebanon, New Hampshire.

International News

The framework on palliative care in Canada - five years later: a report on the state of palliative care in Canada.

Government of Canada; 3/5/24

[From the "Minister's Message," The Honorable Mark Holland, PC, MP] As Minister of Health, I am pleased to present Health Canada's 2023 Report on the State of Palliative Care in Canada. Since the release of the Framework on Palliative Care in Canada in 2018, there have been collective efforts to advance palliative care awareness, access to training, supports for caregivers and providers, and to stimulate research and improve data collection on palliative care. And I am especially encouraged to report that, since 2018, we have moved closer to our collective vision for palliative care in Canada. This progress is the result of collective and collaborative efforts by governments, organizations and

individuals over the last five years.

Editor's Note: What can we learn from our Canadian neighbors from their new five-year report "On the state of palliative care in Canada"? In our daily gleaning of articles for this newsletter, numerous articles with similar topics, ethical challenges, and core purposes appear from Canada.

Other News

15 C-level job openings with HCA

Becker's Hospital Review, by Molly Gamble; 3/5/24

The largest health system in the country is seeking leaders for numerous roles at the top of its hospitals. With more than 182 hospitals and 2,300 sites of care, Nashville, Tenn.-based HCA Healthcare is seeking to fill thousands of positions across its 20-state enterprise. [Included] are job listings active on the HCA job boards as of March 4 for C-level executive positions with its hospitals or subsidiaries, organized by role and presented alphabetically.

Today's Encouragement

Be yourself; everyone is already taken. - Oscar Wilde

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