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**HOSPICE &
PALLIATIVE CARE
TODAY**

March 14th, 2024

Celebrating Hospice & Palliative Social Workers: March is Social Work Month!

The National Association of Social Workers' 2024 theme for Social Work Month is Empowering Social Workers! [Click here for information and ideas.](#)

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Headlines

Vitas To Buy Hospice Assets of Covenant Care in Florida and Alabama

Business Wire; 3/13/24

VITAS Healthcare Corporation, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Chemed Corporation ("Chemed") (NYSE: CHE), announced it entered into an agreement on March 12, 2024 to acquire all hospice operations and an assisted living facility from Covenant Health and Community Services, Inc. d/b/a/ Covenant Care ("Covenant") for an aggregate purchase price of \$85 million. Covenant's hospice operations span the panhandle of Florida and Alabama, specifically including the Tallahassee, Marianna, Fort Walton Beach, Panama City, Crestview and Pens

acola markets in Florida, and the Dothan and Mobile/Daphne markets in Alabama.

Hospice Provider News

CMS hears you, hospice providers

McKnights Home Care, by Liza Berger; 3/8/24

Rarely does the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services succeed in shocking us. The large bureaucracy, which is not exactly known for its nimbleness, managed to do so this week when it abruptly cancelled the hospice component of the Value-Based Insurance Design Model. ... For those who wonder whether advocacy works, I'd chalk this up to a [win](#) for providers &mdash ; and a clear example of advocacy in action.

Nearly 53% of hospices undergo multiple audits simultaneously

Hospice News, by Jim Parker; 3/12/24

Program integrity and an onslaught of audits are top of mind for many hospice providers in 2024. The nation's four largest hospice industry organizations — LeadingAge, the National Association for Home Care & Hospice (NAHC), the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) and the National Partnership for Healthcare and Hospice Innovation (NPHI) — in late 2023 conducted a 133-respondent provider survey focused on regulation. ... About 52.9% reported having multiple audits, each of a different type, within six months of one another, and 31% said they were required to submit the same charts for each of these audits.

Notable mentions: Katie Smith Sloan, LeadingAge; Tom Koutsoumpas, NPHI; Katie Wehri, NAHC; Patrick Harrison, NHPCO.



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[Updated] Inefficient, unfair audits continue to burden hospices, new survey report finds

McKnights Home Care, by Adam Healy; 3/12/24

Clunky audit processes have long strained hospice providers' time and money, and though regulators have made some improvements, many agencies still report glaring issues with investigations, according to a new report released Tuesday by four major hospice organizations. ... Many audits have failed to meet their expressed purpose: Reining in noncompliance. ...

Jimmy Carter has spent over a year in hospice care. How has he defied the odds?

Northeastern Global News, by Tanner Stening; 3/12/24

End-of-life advocates and experts cite Carter's stay in hospice as having a positive impact on the discourse of end-of-life care, which Northeastern University experts say many people put off until it's too late. ... According to the National Institutes of Health, more than 90% of patients who enter hospice care die within the first six months. Roughly 36% of patients die within a week of entering hospice.

Editor's Note: This article includes an important, transparent piece of information that many articles about President Carter's 1-year hospice anniversary have not mentioned: "If the patient lives past six months, the medical professionals would need to recertify the patient for continued care." [Click here for the CMS "Face-to-Face Requirement Affecting Hospice Recertification."](#)

'It's been really inspiring': Grace House continues end-of-life care despite challenges

Akron Beacon Journal, by Kelsie Horner; 3/13/24

Through a flood and financial challenges, [an Akron nonprofit](#) has continued to provide end-of-life care and companionship for people who might otherwise die alone. Since opening its doors 1½ years ago, [Grace House](#) has cared for 66 residents during their final days. ... Grace House is one of only three organizations in the nation to provide free, "non-barrier" end-of-life care for people who are unhoused or alone.

Palliative Care Provider News

[ALS] Controlling what can be controlled: Palliative Care

ALS Association [Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, commonly known as "Lou Gehrig's Disease"]; 3/13/24

"Palliative care specialists can help people determine and define what are the 'everyday things' that matter to them. Some people may already know what these are but may not have had an opportunity to share this information with their health care team," Dr. Mehta says. "Others may not know they can share this with their health care team. They may not know where to find help with these 'everyday things.' [Dr. Ambereen K. Mehta, MD, MPH, FAAHPM, associate professor of palliative care in the Departments of Medicine and Neurology at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine]

Editor's Note: Are your palliative care services connected with your local ALS Association? This page on the ALS website describes beautifully the benefits of palliative care as soon as the diagnosis occurs.

Clinical News

Can we make more accurate prognoses during last days of life?

Journal of Palliative Medicine; by Sylvie Bouchard, Andreea Paula Iancu, Elena Neamt, François Collette, Sylvie Dufresne, Patricia Maureen Guercin, Suganthiny Jeyaganth, < span class="authors-list-item ">Desanka Kovacina, Taliá Malagón, Laurie Musgrave, Marilisa Romano, Jenny Wong, Sybil Skinner-Robertson; 3/8/24

Background: ... Established methods (Palliative Performance Scale [PPS], Palliative Prognostic Index [PPI]) have been validated for intermediate- to long-term prognoses, but last-weeks-of-life prognosis has not been well studied. Patients admitted to a palliative care facility often have a life expectancy of less than three weeks. Reliable last-weeks-of-life prognostic tools are needed.

Conclusions: ... Using SPS [Short-Term Prognosis Signs] along with PPS and PPI

during the last weeks of life could enable a more precise short-term survival prediction across various end-of-life diagnoses. The translation of this research into clinical practice could lead to a better adapted treatment, the identification of a most appropriate care setting for patients, and improved communication of prognosis with patients and families.

Antidepressant prescribing practices of pediatric palliative care providers

Journal of Palliative Medicine, by Teresa Venta; 3/12/24

Objective: This study seeks to describe the antidepressant prescribing practices of PPC providers and describe their level of training and comfort in assessing for anxiety and depression and prescribing psychotropic medications.

Conclusions: Limited training in assessing mental health concerns, prescribing, and managing psychopharmacology suggests an opportunity for more targeted education for pediatric PC providers regarding antidepressant prescribing practices.



The U.S. prison population is rapidly graying. Prisons aren't built for what's coming

NPR, by Meg Anderson; 3/12/24

... "You don't usually build prisons with nursing home-type housing." The proportion of state and federal prisoners who are 55 or older is about five times what it was three decades ago. In 2022, that was more than 186,000 people. ... Prison systems across the U.S. have a constitutional obligation to provide adequate health care, and they're racing to figure out how to care for the elderly in their custody — and how to pay for it.

Editor's Note: This article provides current data and focuses on nursing home type care. For depth information, pair this data with a clinical journal chapter, "[Palliative](#)

*and End-of-Life Care in Prison" - Aston, L. (2023). Palliative and End-of-Life Care in Prison. In: Brooke, J. (eds) Nursing in Prison. Springer, Cham.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-30663-1_8*

Public Policy News

Colorado Senate passes bill to shorten 'Medical-Aid-in-Dying' waiting period

Colorado Newswire, by Sara Wilson; 3/8/24

The Colorado Senate approved a bill Friday that would alter the state's medical aid-in-dying law by shortening the required waiting period and allowing more medical professionals to prescribe the medication. ... Senate Bill 24-68 would tweak the law by shortening the waiting period between a patient's first and second request for the medication from 15 to seven days. ... Statistics from Denver Health's medical aid-in-dying program show that about 1 in 4 patients died from their illness during the current 15-day waiting period. .. The bill would also allow advanced practice registered nurses to prescribe the medication... The bill was amended in committee to reinstate a Colorado residency requirement.

Post-Acute Care News

Home Care costs continue to increase, outpacing other long-term care settings

Home Health Care News, by Andrew Donlan; 3/12/24

The pricing increases in home care have again outpaced other long-term care sectors, according to Genworth's annual cost of care report.



Few hospitals follow recommended practices for evidence-based suicide care

Pew, by Farzana Akkas; 3/12/24

In 2022, suicide claimed the lives of an estimated 49,449 people in the United States. ... Research has shown that almost half of those who die by suicide interact with the health care system within four weeks of their deaths. And those who are hospitalized for suicide risk face an elevated risk of dying by suicide post-discharge, making this a critical time for these patients to have access to resources, support, and care that can keep them safe in the event of a suicidal crisis. But new research shows that only 8% of hospitals in the U.S. have instituted all the key components of evidence-based, best-practice interventions to help at-risk patients who are discharged after receiving care. In fact, more than 1 in 4 are not conducting any of these interventions.

By 2022, COVID pandemic had shaved 1.6 years from global life expectancy, research reveals

University of Minnesota CIDRAP, by Mary Van Beusekom, MS; 3/12/24

... About 131 million people around the world died from any cause in 2020-2021 combined, with 15.9 million more deaths than expected due to COVID-19 infection or pandemic-related social, economic, or behavioral factors, such as delays in seeking healthcare. ... Global life expectancy climbed 22.7 years from 1950 to 2021, from 49.0 to 71.7 years, but from 2019 to 2021, it dropped 1.6 years, reversing historical trends.

79 best hospitals for patient experience, safety: Healthgrades

Becker's Clinical Leadership

Healthgrades recognized 832 hospitals with its 2024 Patient Safety Excellence Awards and Outstanding Patient Experience Award. Only 79 of those hospitals received both awards. The dual recipients spanned 27 states. Texas had the most dual recipients with 13 honorees & dash; including four Baylor Scott and White Health and four Houston Methodist hospitals. [\[Click here for\]](#) the 79 hospitals that received both Patient Safety Excellence and Outstanding Patient Experience awards, listed by state.

Editor's Note: Are hospitals you partner with listed? If so, congratulate them and forward this to them. Invite them to register for our free Hospice & Palliative Care Today newsletter at <https://hospicepalliativecaretoday.com/registration>.

All-inclusive senior care center opens first Florida facility in Tampa

Tampa Beacon, by Mike Camunas; 3/11/24

It's a one-stop shop for senior medical services — and social activities. On March 4, InnovAge unveiled its new, state-of-the-art Senior Care Center in Tampa, marking the medical service provider's first facility in Florida. The 33,500-square-foot facility in a renovated building provides doctor visits, dental care, social activities, and even transportation for seniors. The facility ... can serve up to 1,300 patients or participants through PACE, or Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly, a Medicare and Medicaid program that helps people meet their health care needs in the community instead of going to a nursing home or other care facility.

Technology / Innovations News

CMS Statement on continued action to respond to the cyberattack on change healthcare

CMS.gov Press Release; 3/9/24

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is continuing to monitor and assess the impact that the cyberattack on UnitedHealth Group's subsidiary Change Healthcare has had on all provider and supplier types. Today, CMS is announcing that, in addition to considering applications for accelerated payments for Medicare Part A providers, we will also be considering applications for advance payments for Part B suppliers.

Health networks in nursing: limitless possibilities

EMR Industry; 3/12/24

An expanding health information exchange has linked 71 hospitals and nearly 600 post-acute providers in New Jersey, surpassing expectations and offering staffing insights beyond the initial scope of a patient discharge initiative.

... Jennifer D'Angelo, Vice President and General Manager of the New Jersey Health Information Network (NJHIN), explained, "If we see an uptick in transfers out from certain facilities to the hospital, then we know that something is going on within that region or within that health system or care setting." This proactive approach allows for deeper investigations ...

Providers push lawmakers to make telehealth provisions permanent

McKnights Home Care, by Foster Stubbs; 3/11/24

More than 200 healthcare organizations including LeadingAge and the National Association for Home Care & Hospice recently signed a letter to congressional leadership urging the permanent adoption of telehealth provisions affecting Medicare beneficiaries. Current provisions, which are set to expire at the end of the year, allow beneficiaries to access telehealth services in their home.

Ethics

What are important ethical implications of using Facial Recognition Technology in health care?

AMA Journal of Ethics, by Nicole Martinez-Martin, JD, PhD; orig post 2/24, redistributed 3/13/24

Applications of facial recognition technology (FRT) in health care settings have been developed to identify and monitor patients as well as to diagnose genetic, medical, and behavioral conditions. The use of FRT in health care suggests the importance of informed consent, data input and analysis quality, effective communication about incidental findings, and potential influence on patient-clinician relationships. Privacy and data protection are thought to present challenges for the use of FRT for health applications.

General News

Film Festival and local organizations partner to present 'Lily' March 21

Sedona.Biz; 3/9/24

Accord Hospice & Palliative Care is continuing their educational efforts by partnering with the Hospice Foundation of America (HFA) to marry theater and Advance Care Directive education through the AD Project – a series of 10-minute plays that feature different relationships and settings to illustrate the importance of putting your medical wishes in writing. ...Playwright Bryan Harnetiaux has worked with HFA for years developing a series of shows that depict real life scenarios involving all different family dynamics. The show “Lily” will present a divorced couple who are embarking on a very real dilemma – who to choose to be your voice when you can no longer speak for yourself.

Editor's Note: Consider using these 10-minute plays in your community. [Click here for more information](#) about HFA's innovative AD (Advance Directives).

Death Cafes in Duluth aim to make end of life something more normal to talk about

ABC WDIO; 3/11/24

Talking about death can be difficult and daunting. A Duluth woman who's an estate attorney wants to change that. Amy Kuronen just hosted her first Death Cafe. Nine people attended, and it was an open ended conversation without an agenda. ... It's not a grief support group, although you can mention your grief. It's more about connecting and sharing.

Editor's Note: Are you aware of Death Cafes in your area? Do their representatives have relevant information about your hospice and palliative care services?

Other News

5 hospitals seeking CEOs

Becker's Hospital Review, by Kelly Gooch; 3/11/24

Here are five hospitals that recently posted job listings seeking CEOs. |

1. [Ascension St. Thomas Behavioral Health Hospital \(Nashville, Tenn.\)](#)
2. [East Liverpool \(Ohio\) City Hospital](#)
3. [Lompoc \(Calif.\) Valley Medical Center](#)
4. [Princeton Baptist Medical Center \(Birmingham, Ala.\)](#)
5. [St. Francis Hospital \(Colorado Springs, Colo.\)](#)

Today's Encouragement

Change the way you look at things and the things you look at change. — Wayne W. Dyer

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