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**HOSPICE &
PALLIATIVE CARE
TODAY**

March 21st, 2024

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Headlines

Hearing with Health and Human Services Secretary Becerra

House Ways and Means Committee

Publisher's note: CA Representatives Steel (@ 4:01) and Van Duyne (@ 4:14) ask pointed questions of Secretary Becerra regarding hospice fraud, particularly focused on Southern California. Thanks to Sheila Clark, [California Hospice & Palliative Care Association](#), for sharing this link. Also, yesterday (3/20/24) Judi Lund Person, [Lund Person & Associates Hospice Consulting](#), presented on this specific topic at the [Nebraska Hospice & Palliative Care Association Annual Conference](#).

Hospice Provider News

CAHPS Hospice Survey - Quality Assurance Guidelines V10.0: Technical Corrections and Clarifications, March 2024

HospiceCahpsSurvey.org; 3/20/24

Subsequent to the release of the CAHPS Hospice Survey Quality Assurance

Guidelines V10.0 (QAG V10.0), it has been determined that there is a specific content item that requires correction, addition and/or further clarification. The protocol listed in this document replace the previous release of the content in the CAHPS Hospice Survey Quality Assurance Guidelines V10.0. The items are identified [in the pdf available at the title's link].

How the analytics of care can balance workforce capacity

MedCity News, by Derek Streat; 3/19/24

U.S. healthcare is experiencing a supply and demand crisis as it races to keep pace with an aging population amidst a workforce shortage and mounting financial pressures. And the situation appears unlikely to improve anytime soon. In fact, recent projections anticipate a shortfall of 139,000 physicians in the next decade, according to the Association of American Medical Colleges. One limiting factor preventing the efficient management of workforce resources is a lack of data interoperability. ...



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Home-based care employment exceeding pre-pandemic levels

Hospice News, by Jim Parker; 3/19/24

Employment in the home-based care sector rose above pre-pandemic levels in 2023, according to the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC). The U.S. Department of Commerce defines this sector to include hospices, home health agencies, private duty, pediatric agencies and other providers of care in the home. ... Nevertheless, workforce pressures and associated costs are overwhelmingly the industry's most damaging headwind, including the associated wage hikes, enhanced benefits and bonus programs. The shortages also have reduced clinical capacity, which has contributed to drops in patient census and length of stay for many providers.

FTC and DOJ signal greatly increased scrutiny of private equity firms' acquisitions in healthcare

The National Law Review; Herbert F. Allen, Matthew C. Hans, Arindam Kar, Mitchell D. Raup of Polisinelli PC; 3/19/24

The top enforcers at the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and Antitrust Division of the Department of Justice (DOJ) are sending strong signals that private equity (PE) firms are likely to be the next target in the Biden Administration's aggressive antitrust enforcement agenda. ... Dr. Eileen Applebaum, an economist at the Center for Economic and Policy Research, cited a range of effects that can be attributed to PE ownership:

1. Taking profits that could be used to invest in new facilities, staffing, or technology.
2. Manipulating CMS capitated reimbursement programs in ways that limit access to health care for seniors.
3. Reducing staffing in ways that reduce quality and cause harm to patients and workers.
4. Encumbering acquired health care companies with debt that reduces their long-term viability.
5. Selling off real estate owned by acquired health care companies and entering them into oppressive long-term leases.

Hospice group pushes for clarity in N.Y. state budget as some warm to for-profit care

Spectrum News 1; by Susan Arbetter; 3/19/24

New York state has the lowest utilization of hospice in the country, which can be attributed to several factors, including low health literacy rates. But the state's recent progress in support of end-of-life care may be threatened by something even more insidious: corporate greed. To investigate that issue nationally, a joint request for information was issued by the federal Department of Health and Human Services and the Federal Trade Commission into private equity-backed health care and its impact on quality. Yet despite dire warnings, New York state is slowly opening the door to for-profit, private equity-backed hospice care.



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Palliative Care Provider News

Patient and caregiver satisfaction of a palliative care chronic diseases clinic during COVID lockdowns

Chronic Illness; by Xiang Rong Sim, Jade Hudson, Catriona Parker, Fiona Runacres, Peter Poon; 3/20/24, online ahead of print

Objectives: To assess the quality assurance of a specialist palliative care clinic focused on chronic diseases and explore the satisfaction and acceptability of the telemedicine model amongst patients and caregivers.

Results: ... the most common primary diagnosis was renal failure. Participants rated telemedicine as easier to access than face-to-face appointments due to convenience. Telemedicine was rated highly for future utility, with video consultations being perceived as more useful than telephone consultations. Participants responded overwhelmingly well towards the clinic.

Clinical News

Reducing adverse events with clinical audit

Healthcare Connection; by Annette Schandl, George Bezzerides, Erin Meyer; 3/19/24

Patient safety is at the core of healthcare. Yet, clinical audits remain underrepresented on many healthcare organizations' internal audit plans. ...

Planning clinical audits: A checklist ...

- Understand what audits are already occurring at the organization ...
- Lean on data from multiple sources. ...
- Have ongoing communication about the clinical audit plan. ...

Are the robots coming for my nursing job?

Minority Nurse; 3/20/24

While medication-dispensing robots, telemetry, electronic fetal monitoring, artificial intelligence, and other technological advances have altered our work as

nurses, fears that robots will replace us and send nurses into the historical career dustbin are likely unfounded. ... The human side of nursing is the art that maintains the sacredness of the nurse-patient bond. Nursing may be partially driven by plans of care developed within the parameters of the nursing process, but where the rubber hits the road is where person-to-person interaction informs the patient experience and the nurse's calling.



Music Therapy intervention to reduce symptom burden in hospice patients: A descriptive study

American Journal of Hospice & Palliative Care; by Madison H Estell, Kevin J Whitford, Angela M Ulrich, Brianna E Larsen, Christina Wood, Maureen L Bigelow, Travis J Dockter, Kimberly L Schoonover, Amy J Stelpflug, Jacob J Strand, Monica P Walton, Maria I Lapid; 3/19/24 online ahead of print

Results: Patients reported a reduction in symptom severity and emotional distress and an increase in QOL. All patients endorsed satisfaction with music therapy, describing it as particularly beneficial for stress relief, relaxation, spiritual support, emotional support, and well-being. Scores on overall QOL and stress were worse for caregivers.

Frailty needs to be a factor in drug development, proposed guidelines suggest

McKnights Long-Term Care News, by Kristen Fischer; 3/20/24

A new report on strategies for geriatric drug development and assessment determined that drugs need to consider age as well as other factors that older adults face such as cognitive impairment, [frailty](#) and polypharmacy. This is according to the International Union of Basic and Clinical Pharmacology (IUPHAR) Geriatric Committee, which published the report. The strategies

specifically focused on integrating frailty as a factor in drug development. The [report](#), published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* earlier this month, includes 12 principles pertaining to frailty in reference to drug development. The recommendations include measuring frailty at the start of when a person goes on a drug they'll likely take regularly.

Multinational Association of Supportive Care in Cancer (MASCC) expert opinion/guidance on the use of clinically assisted hydration in patients with advanced cancer

Support Care Cancer; by Jo Hayes, Eduardo Bruera, Gregory Crawford, Mapi Fleury, Marcos Santos, Jo Thompson, Andrew Davies; 3/13/24

Purpose: The provision of clinically assisted hydration (CAH) in patients with advanced cancer is controversial, and there is a paucity of specific guidance and so a diversity in clinical practice. Consequently, the Palliative Care Study Group of the Multinational Association of Supportive Care in Cancer (MASCC) formed a sub-group to develop evidence-based guidance on the use of CAH in patients with advanced cancer.



Student-run Arizona non-profit uses origami to connect with hospital [and hospice] patients

The State Press, by Pippa Fung; 3/19/24

The Wishing Crane Project, founded by Arizona student Charles Zhang, serves hospice and hospital patients through art. In the story of Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes, a young girl tried to fold 1,000 paper cranes in the hopes that it would help her push through a terminal illness. Years later, students across Arizona and at ASU are folding their own cranes [and writing hopeful messages] to support others through their difficult journeys.

Editor's Note: To Hospice Volunteer Directors/Managers, do you receive requests from high school students/groups requesting community service hours? [Click here for The Wishing Crane Project.](#)

Regulatory News

Medi-Cal Update - Hospice Care Program Bulletin

Medi-Cal, March Bulletin

[Topics include:]

1. New Hospice Election and Non-Covered Items, Services and Drugs Notification Forms Required
2. Guidance for Claim Payments and Status
3. National Correct Coding Initiative Quarterly Update for April 2024
4. 2024 Med-Cal Provider Training Event Update
5. Med-Cal In-Person Training Event - May 2024
6. Get the Latest Medi-Cal News
7. Provider Manual Revisions

Mergers & Aquisition News

Private equity-backed consolidation divides physicians

Modern Healthcare, by Alex Kacik; 3/18/24

... Fewer physicians — only 46.7% in 2022 compared with 60.1% in 2012 — work in practices wholly owned by doctors amid struggles to manage reimbursement cuts, regulation and rising expenses. As a result, more physicians are joining health systems, private equity-backed management services organizations and insurers. That trend has spurred research, lobbying groups, regulation and legislation on physician employment models.

Oregon's health authority reviewing UnitedHealth's acquisition of Amedisys

Reuters, by Leroy Leo; 3/19/24

Amedisys said on Tuesday Oregon's health authority has started a review of UnitedHealth Group's \$3.3 billion acquisition of the home health and hospice caregiver. UnitedHealth had announced the acquisition in June, after competing with Option Care Health.

Fitch: Scrutiny of private equity deals is short-term positive

Modern Healthcare, by Hayley Desilva; 3/18/24

Increased federal scrutiny of healthcare mergers and acquisitions is expected to have mixed consequences for providers' credit, particularly when private equity buyers are involved, according to Fitch Ratings. ... In December, the [Federal Trade Commission] FTC updated its merger guidelines to foster competition across all industries, including healthcare. However, healthcare acquisitions are expected to increase this year as financial conditions improve.

Post-Acute Care News

New report blasts nursing home citations, rate of abuse tags

McKnights Long-Term Care News, by Josh Henreckson; 3/20/24

An organization dedicated to helping seniors find care issued a report Tuesday raising alarm about the number of nursing home abuse citations in 2023, but senior care leaders say a more punitive approach to surveys is actually hurting residents and their facilities. The SeniorLiving.org report used last year's Medicare data to highlight that nursing homes received nearly 95,000 health citations during that time frame. Of that number, nearly 7,700 — or approximately 8% — were citations for abuse, neglect or exploitation.&nbs p;

Nurses practicing primarily in care homes 'improve end-of-life care'

Nursing Times, by Steve Ford; 3/19/24

Nurses and other clinicians who specialise in working in care homes represent an important resource when it comes to improving the quality of end-of-life care for residents, a large US study suggests. Researchers found nurse practitioners working mostly in care homes may decrease the likelihood of residents experiencing stressful hospital admissions and improve the quality of life in their last days.

Home-focused PACE model continues to gain traction across US

Home Health Care News, by Joyce Famakinwa; 3/19/24

A Georgia House Bill that would create a Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) was passed by the state senate earlier this month. House Bill 1078 passed in a 49 to 1 senate vote.

Specifically, the bill creates a new adult day center licensure exclusion in order to authorize the Department of Community Health to establish and implement

PACE in Georgia as part of the state's medical assistance program. The Department of Community Health would manage the program.

Technology / Innovations News

Give generative AI another decade to revolutionize healthcare

Modern Healthcare - Opinion, by Keith Figoli; 3/15/24

... Generative artificial intelligence is poised to transform healthcare by enabling solutions to effectively address [common patient care] challenges. This cutting-edge technology opens new avenues for innovation in diagnosis, treatment planning, operations efficiency and overall healthcare delivery—and industry leaders are taking notice. A recent survey revealed that 25% of healthcare organizations implemented a generative AI solution in 2023, while 58% plan to adopt one this year. However, the generative AI-driven transformation won't – and shouldn't – happen overnight.

Insurer responses to Change outage fail to impress provider

Modern Healthcare, by Nona Tepper and Lauren Berryman; 3/18/24

Insurers have modified claims and payment operations amid the Change Healthcare network outage, but providers contend the moves are not enough to address their financial challenges.

International News

[Singapore] Home palliative care capacity to increase 50% to 3,600 places by 2025

CNA; 3/19/2024

Singapore is on track to add another 1,200 home palliative care places by 2025, the Ministry of Health (MOH) said on Tuesday (Mar 19). This is a 50 per cent increase from the number of places currently available and will bring the total number of home palliative care places to 3,600, MOH said in an update on the 2023 National Strategy for Palliative Care.

Today's Encouragement

To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow. - Audrey Hepburn

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