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March 25th, 2024

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Headlines

Top 10 patient safety threats of 2024: Helping new clinicians, maternal care barriers, AI, and more

Chief Healthcare Executive, by Ron Southwick; 3/21/24

When ECRI unveiled its list of the leading threats to patient safety for 2024, some items are likely to be expected, such as physician burnout, delays in care due to drug shortages or falls in the hospital. However, ECRI, a nonprofit group focused on patient safety, placed one item atop all others: the challenges in helping new clinicians move from training to caring for patients. ... ECRI's top 10 threats to patient safety for 2024:

1. Transitioning new clinicians from education into practice
2. Workarounds with barcode medication administration systems
3. Barriers to access to maternal care
4. Unintended consequences of technology adoption, including AI
5. Decline in physical and emotional well-being of healthcare workers
6. Complexity of preventing diagnostic error

7. Ensuring equitable care for patients with physical and intellectual disabilities
8. Care delays due to drug, supply, and equipment shortages
9. Misuse of parenteral syringes to administer oral liquid medications
10. Continued challenges with preventing patient falls

HHS Secretary Becerra: We're with you on telehealth flexibilities

Hospice News, by Jim Parker; 3/21/24

Telehealth flexibilities must become permanent U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Xavier Becerra indicated in a congressional hearing [Wed]. At the end of this year, telehealth flexibilities implemented during the pandemic are slated to expire. In a hearing before the U.S. House Ways and Means Committee Becerra said that HHS was willing to make them permanent. However, he said this would require closer collaboration with state governments. "We're with you. We can't allow those flexibilities to expire, and we need to work closer with our state partners, because much of the flexibility that comes from telehealth means being able to go over state lines," Becerra said.

Hospice Provider News

Record funding raised for Tidewell Hospice, Empath Health

HomeCare News; 3/21/24

Nearly 600 people attended the Tidewell Foundation's Crystal Anniversary Signature Luncheon on Friday, March 1, at The Ritz-Carlton in Sarasota. The 15th Annual event, the Tidewell Foundation's largest fundraiser, raised a record \$434,558 to benefit Tidewell Hospice and Empath Health services that reach more than 10,000 people each year in Charlotte, DeSoto, Manatee and Sarasota counties in Florida. Health advocate, movie, TV and Broadway actress, five-time Golden Globe nominee, New York Times best-selling author and memory expert Marilu Henner was the keynote speaker. Henner is a spokesperson for Alzheimer's disease awareness. She has been a vocal advocate for hospice care, and in 2019 she became a spokesperson for the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization.

Clinical News

Physicians often shy away from preparing their patients to die

Today'sHospitalist, by Colleen Poggenburg, MD, MS; 3/22/24

There's beauty in death if we can tolerate looking. ... The beauty in death is the reflections that occur in the weeks, days and minutes prior to it, which together make up a summary of someone's life. Why then do physicians view this time-honored decline as a series of clustered medical problems, when it really is just someone moving toward death? Are we so concerned about treating just one more condition, and do we actually think it will solve the growing list of medical problems that dying patients have? ... I compared dying to pregnancy to “soften&rdq uo; the description of this decline. Here's how I see that comparison:

...

Editor's Note: The author offers a fascinating, meaningful comparison of physician/patient conversations with someone who is pregnant versus someone who is dying. I encourage you to share this article with your clinical leaders (and adapt it for staff), as this model beautifully reframes important conversations that can empower patients and their families.

Racial/ethnic differences in care intensity at the end of life for patients with lung cancer

The ASCO Post, by Matthew Stenger; 3/21/24

The study used data from the California Cancer Registry linked to patient discharge data abstracts. The primary outcome measure was intensity of care in the last 14 days before death, with greater intensity defined as any hospital admission or emergency department visit, intensive care unit (ICU) admission, intubation, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), hemodialysis, and death in an acute care setting. ... The authors concluded: “Compared with [non-Hispanic White] patients, [Asian/Pacific Islander], Black, and Hispanic patients who died with lung cancer experienced higher intensity of [end-of-life] care. Future studies

should develop approaches to eliminate such racial and ethnic disparities in care delivery at the [end of life].”

"A strong reason why I enjoy coming to work": Clinician acceptability of a palliative and supportive care intervention (PACT) for older adults with acute myeloid leukemia and their care partners

Journal of Geriatric Oncology; by Ayomide Okanlawon Bankole, Natasha Renee Burse, Victoria Crowder, Ya-Ning Chan, Rachel Hirschey, Ahrang Jung, Kelly R Tan, Susan Coppola, Mackenzi Pergolotti, Daniel R Richardson, Ashley Leak Bryant; 3/20/24

Introduction: ... In this study, we examined clinician acceptability of a NIH-funded interdisciplinary Palliative and Supportive Care intervention (PACT) for older adults with acute myeloid leukemia (AML) and their care partners that transcends both inpatient and outpatient settings.

Results: ... Five themes were identified in the thematic analysis: (1) Emotions and affect towards the intervention, (2) Intervention coherence and self-efficacy, (3) Barriers, burden, and opportunity costs of delivering the intervention, (4) Usefulness and effectiveness of the intervention, and (5) Recommendations to improve intervention delivery.



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End-of-life care in heart failure

MedPageToday; by Crystal Phend, reviewed by Andrew Perry, MD; 3/22/24

Palliative care has a perception problem. It's often associated with end of life or advanced cancer. However, cardiovascular disease actually accounts for a higher proportion of adults in need of palliative care than does cancer (38.5% vs 34%), according to the World Health Organization. Patients with heart failure (HF) have a median survival of about 5 years -- on par with many types of cancer, yet patients with cancer are much more likely to be referred to palliative care.

Regulatory News

New legislation proposes national expansion of integrated care models

Health Affairs, by Laura M. Keohane; 3/20, 24

This article is the latest in the Health Affairs Forefront major series, Medicare and Medicaid Integration. The series features analysis, proposals, and commentary that will inform policies on the state and federal levels to advance integrated care for those dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid. ... On March 14, a bipartisan group of senators—members of the Senate Duals Working Group—released legislation (The DUALS Act: Delivering Unified Access to Lifesaving Services Act of 2024) that commits to ambitious goals for aligning Medicare and Medicaid coverage ... Would the integration measures proposed in this bill be more successful [than previous programs] in achieving these goals? This Forefront article highlights the key components of the legislation and assesses its ability to advance better outcomes for dual-eligible beneficiaries.

A \$400M incentive drives hospitals to meet health equity goals

Modern Healthcare, by Kara Hartnett; 3/21/24

Hospitals across Massachusetts are building infrastructure to examine health disparities and address social needs, driven by new incentives within the state's Medicaid program. The program is authorized to pay out \$400 million annually to private acute-care hospitals, divided among those that comply with an evolving set of operational and quality standards related to health equity. Eventually, healthcare organizations will receive distributions based on their ability to close gaps in care.



Public Policy News

[Mississippi] Doctors plead with Senate to 'do right' and expand Medicaid

Mississippi Today, by Sophia Paffenroth; 3/21/24

... "I'm calling on the Senate to do right and to come up with a mechanism by which these people can have coverage," Dr. Randy Easterling, former president of the Mississippi State Medical Association, said. Easterling recounted the story of one working Miss issippian named Jimmy who delayed seeking treatment and was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a type of cancer. He is now on hospice and "probably has two to three weeks to live," Easterling said.

Medical marijuana law does not impair employers' right to drug-free workplace *Insurance Journal, by Andrew G. Simpson; 3/22/24*

A Connecticut employer has the right to terminate an employee who is impaired by medical marijuana in the workplace. The Connecticut Appellate Court on March 19 upheld the dismissal of a lawsuit brought against a nonprofit pre-school by a teaching assistant who used medical marijuana for treatment of her disability and was fired for violating the school's drug-free workplace policy by showing up for work impaired.

NH House passes medical aid in dying: Debate isn't over yet

Portsmouth Herald, by Margie Cullen; 3/22/24

The End of Life Options Act, which would allow terminally ill people in New Hampshire to access medical aid in dying, narrowly passed in the House of Representatives Thursday. While versions of this bill have been brought to the legislature in past years, this is the first time it has passed the House. It comes after it gained its first victory in the House Judiciary Committee, where it was recommended to pass 13-7 for the first time. In the House Thursday, it passed 179-176.



Mergers & Aquisition News

Deal or No Deal: The futures of 3 home-based care companies

Home Health Care News; by Andrew Donlan; 3/21/24

Most buyers in home health and personal care are signaling they'll be more active in the M&A market this year. There are three major home-based care deals that have happened, or may happen, in the near-term future. All of them could have significant ripple effects.

Post-Acute Care News

36 rural hospitals have closed since 2020

Becker's Hospital CFO Report, by Alan Condon; 3/21/24

The closures highlight the heightened financial challenges that rural hospitals face amid persisting workforce shortages, rising costs and leveling reimbursement. In addition, only 45% of rural hospitals now [offer](#) labor and delivery services, and in 10 states, less than 33% do, according to the Center for Healthcare Quality and Payment Reform. [Listed in the article] are the 36 rural hospitals that closed since 2020, beginning with the most recent.

Report: Alzheimer's and dementia caregivers total 840K in Florida, bear heavy burden

NPR WMFE, by Joe Byrnes; 3/22/24

The number of Floridians serving as caregivers for people with Alzheimer's and other dementias is an estimated 840,000, an increase of 13,000 in just one year, according to an annual report from the Alzheimer's Association. Caregiving takes a toll on families hit by the degenerative brain disease, but a new program from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services could lessen that burden.

... [This] promising resource in the works is the Guiding an Improved Dementia Experience Model, an approach that includes the patient and caregiver. The GUIDE Model -- through the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services -- starts in July.

Lessons for skilled nursing and assisted living facilities from the 'largest health care fraud case'

JD Supra, by Callan Stein and Rebecca Younker; 3/22/24

Phillip Esformes, the alleged mastermind of one of "the largest single criminal health care fraud cases ever brought against individuals by the Department of Justice," has finally reached a plea deal with the Department of Justice (DOJ),

concluding the eight-year-long case. ... [The authors identify the following 3 "Lessons Learned From the *Esformes* Case":]

1. Be Cautious When Referring Between Facilities With Shared Ownership ...
2. Combat Patient Steering by Offering Patient Choice ...
3. Do Not Forget About Stark Law

Technology / Innovations News

AI scribe saves doctors an hour at the keyboard every day

AMA, by Andis Robeznieks; 3/18/24

When a health system rolls out new technology that it insists will make physicians' lives easier, the announcement is typically met with skepticism. But the use of augmented intelligence (AI)—often called artificial intelligence—has changed that. The Permanente Medical Group's rollout of ambient AI scribes to reduce documentation burdens has been deemed a success, saving most of the physicians using it an average of one hour a day at the keyboard. ... Refinement of the tool, however, is ongoing. ... For example, one physician mentioned scheduling a patient's prostate exam, but the AI scribe recorded that the exam had been performed.

General News

Inside Jefferson's push to engage retired nurses

Becker's Clinical Leadership, by Mariah Taylor; 3/21/24

Philadelphia-based Jefferson Health is keeping more retired nurses connected to the system through its Nurse Emeritus program. ... The program offers retirees an opportunity to reenter the workforce and provide guidance to new nurses and help nurses at the bedside. To participate, retired nurses must have an active New Jersey nursing license, work at least eight hours per month and have retired in the last three years. Nurse Emeritus participants work in an education-based role and do not perform hands-on clinical care or medication administration.

8 likely next in-demand nursing roles, per Tampa General's chief nurse

Becker's Clinical Leadership, by Laura Dyrda; 3/15/24

... "In the next two to three years, the nursing team may require new roles and

skills to adapt to the changing healthcare landscape," said Wendi Goodson-Celerin, DNP, APRN, senior vice president and chief nursing executive at Tampa (Fla.) General Hospital. Dr. Goodson-Celerin outlined potential roles and skills that may be in demand over the next two to three years:

1. Telehealth nurse ...
2. Data analyst nurse ...
3. Nurse informaticist ...
4. Health coach ...
5. Patient navigator ...
6. Cultural competence specialist ...
7. Interprofessional collaborator ...
8. Lifelong learner ...

Cancer: It's not like the movies

UCI Health, by Heather Shannon; 3/21/24

Movies have the power to make fictional stories seem so vivid they leave an impression and a feeling that lasts forever. That's especially true for films about someone diagnosed with cancer who ultimately meets a tragic end. "Patients often come in with an image in their head based on the movies they've seen that had a cancer patient in it," says UCI Health medical oncologist Dr. Arash Rezazadeh Kalebasty. ... Rezazadeh and his co-authors found several problems with how cancer was characterized in the movies, including: Cancer type ...; Curability ...; Palliative care ...

Massachusetts makes paid family leave more accessible, offering services in Spanish, Portuguese

New England Public Media, by Elizabeth Roman; 3/22/24

... The state passed a law in 2018 which provides paid family and medical leave (PFML) for serious injury or illness whether personal or a family member, as well as time for parental leave, but found that people whose primary language is not English were unaware of, or hesitant, to apply for the services. ... While the state portal for applying for PFML services now has options in various languages, some people are still overwhelmed by filling paperwork out online. ... There are representatives who speak Spanish and Portuguese and the state also works with an interpretation service for many other languages.

Thank a social worker this month

The Alpena News; 3/22/24

March is National Social Worker Month, and we encourage anyone who knows a social worker to take the opportunity to thank him or her for all they do. ... There are more than 700,000 social workers across the U.S., more than 30,000 of them in Michigan, working in all kinds of fields, from child advocacy and protection to behavioral health to hospitals and hospice. "Our mission is to help the vulnerable," Karen Wagner, a social worker with Hospice of Michigan's Alpena team, told News staff writer Mike Gonzalez for a recent story.

Education

How the healthcare sector is handling cybersecurity training

Modern Healthcare, by Mari Devereaux; 3/21/24

... Healthcare entities should use the Change Healthcare incident as a lesson on how to strengthen their own cybersecurity and an opportunity to have conversations about third-party risk, contingency planning and vendor backups, said John Riggi, national adviser for cybersecurity and risk at the American Hospital Association. ... Both executives and lower-level staff need to be trained on how to spot a potential social engineering attack, best practices around cyber hygiene, and how to enact downtime procedures in the event that third party services are lost for up to 30 days or longer, Riggi said.

Today's Encouragement

March Madness is like a rollercoaster – even if your bracket is busted, the ride is still thrilling.

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