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Headlines

[The Hospice Special Focus Program: What it is & why it is important](#)

FORVIS, by Angela Huff; 3/25/24

The CMS Hospice Special Focus Program (SFP) aims to shed light on poorly performing hospices. CMS has publicly stated it is looking closely at the hospice industry due to increasing concerns regarding fraud, waste, and abuse. The Hospice Special Focus Program (SFP) is a new CMS program that identifies poor-performing hospices, takes action to inform the public, and engages those hospices to either improve their performance or terminate the hospice from the Medicare program.

[Dr. Kevorkian was convicted of murder 25 years ago today: Examining the mixed legacy of a fighter for patient autonomy](#)

Reason, by Jeffrey A. Singer; 3/26/24

Today marks the 25th anniversary of Dr. Jack Kevorkian's conviction of second-degree murder for performing euthanasia on Thomas Youk, a Michigan man suffering from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or Lou Gehrig's Disease.

... Kevorkian, a medical pathologist, had been defying state laws by engaging in assisted suicide—he claimed to help more than 130 people die— often using machines. But this was different. Kevorkian was not *assisting* a suicide. Kevorkian videotaped hi mself *injecting* Youk with lethal chemicals. He was doing all the work. And despite having received Youk's informed consent, the Michigan Court considered it murder. ... Today, physician-assisted suicide is legal in 11

jurisdictions: California, Colorado, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Montana, Maine, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington. ... Autonomous adults have the right to govern their bodies freely, provided they respect the equal rights of others. ... Active and passive euthanasia are grim exercises for physicians like me who decided to become doctors because we wanted to save lives. ...

Editor's Note: Read more from this article that provides significant contexts for today's highly controversial decisions: historical, legal, medical, ethical, and geographical (international).

Hospice Provider News

Caring for patients with non-English language preferences

American Association of Critical-Care Nurses; 3/25/24

... With a growing population of people who speak a language other than English at home, nurses and other healthcare professionals must work toward providing better language-inclusive medical care. ... Nurses and other clinical providers must be well-informed regarding the lifesaving nature of language access in healthcare despite any personal bias against or perceived inconvenience of using interpreter services. [This article includes:]

- Challenges to Access ...
- Barriers Lead to Inequity ...
- It's Required [regulatory and federal] ...
- How You Can Help [includes "best practices when working with medical interpreters" and "negative attitudes on language equity] ...
- Looking Forward ...



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Why California doesn't know how many people are dying while homeless

KQED, by Vanessa Rancano; 3/25/24

The grants manager and his team at Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless knew people were dying on the streets, but they wanted more than anecdotal evidence; they wanted data that could show them the big picture and help them hone their strategies. ... Alameda County's latest homeless mortality report is now prompting the team to focus on how to extend palliative care services to unhoused people with terminal illnesses. Garlin estimates almost one-fifth of those who died in 2022 would likely have been eligible for hospice care.

Full-time Las Vegas hospice employees working 32-hours a week. How does the nation compare?

Fox 5 KVVU-TV, by Miles Friess and Nkiruka Azuka; 3/25/24

Working four days a week, but getting paid for five. ... "This is a true four day work week," said Owen Lawrie, one of the owners of Uplift Hospice." It's four [eight hour days], not four [ten hour days]. So it really is an extra 52 days off a year." Uplift Hospice is a company that provides at-home hospice care. He says the schedule is not only beneficial to employees, but to their patients as well. "Because they are so appreciative of that extra day, the teamwork's even better and then the quality of care just continues to be excellent," he said.

ND HHS launches program for relatives providing care

CBS KX News, by Nathaniel House; 3/25/24

On Monday, North Dakota Health and Human Services (HHS) announced a new program for family members who provide extraordinary care to either a child or adult. Family members who provide extraordinary care to either a child or adult enrolled in an eligible North Dakota (ND) Medicaid 1915(c) waiver may receive payments from the state through the new Family Paid Caregiver pilot program. ... Below is a list of all eligible ND Medicaid 1915(c) waivers:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder Birth Through 17 Waiver
- Children with Medically Fragile Needs Home and Community-Based Services Waiver
- Children's Hospice Home and Community-Based Services Waiver
- Traditional Individual with Intellectual Disabilities and Developmental Disabilities Home and Community-Based Services Waiver



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Clinical News

What is the FAST scale for Alzheimer's?

MedicalNewsToday, by Charlotte Lillis and medically reviewed by Shilpa Amin, MD, CAQ, FAAFP; 3/25/24

The Reisberg Functional Assessment Screening Tool (FAST) is a scale that doctors use to diagnose and evaluate aspects of Alzheimer's disease. ... This article provides an overview of the FAST tool, including a breakdown of its individual stages. It also outlines what to expect from the FAST evaluation, what the scale means for hospice care, and more.

Editor's Note: Your physicians and nurses are sure to know this FAST scale. Additionally--especially when interfacing with nursing or assisted living facilities--your referral/admission leaders, social workers, and chaplains need to be familiar with how to these different stages impact their palliative and/or hospice roles with patients and their families.

'You can become a husband again'

National Association of Federal Retirees (Canada); by Jennifer Campbell; 3/25/24

When his wife got a much-needed bed in palliative care, a perceptive nurse told Brian Hills he could concentrate on being a husband again, instead of a caregiver.

Meaning-making among parents of children with severe neurologic impairment in the PICU

Pediatrics / PubMed; by Jori F Bogetz, Ellie Oslin, Maeve O'Donnell, Krysta S Barton, Joyce P Yi-Frazier, R Scott Watson, Abby R Rosenberg; 3/26/24 Online ahead of print

Results: Parents discussed ongoing meaning-making that occurred through domains of comprehension and purpose, and themes of understanding of other people and the world around them. Subthemes focused on

appreciation/acceptance, adaptability/accountability, valuing all lives, and learning/teaching about their child.



At Levine Children’s Hospital, therapy dogs provide “a special kind of medicine”

Charlotte Magazine, by Jen Tota McGivney; 3/25/24

Last winter, after a little boy at Levine Children’s Hospital entered end-of-life care, his doctors and nurses wanted to give the boy and his family happy moments together in the hospital. They called in a specialist. Enter Sprout, a 4-year-old Labrador retriever. Sprout is the key member of the Art & Barks program at the oncology and hemophilia clinic at Levine Children’s Hospital. ... The family spent hours that day at Art & Barks, drawing and taking pictures together and cuddling Sprout. The mementos became priceless works of art.

The grief you feel is real

Psychology Today, by Rosemary K.M. Sword and Philip Zimbardo PhD; 3/25/24

We might think grief is all the same. But there are many kinds. [This articles briefly identifies various kinds of grief, including the following:]

- Abbreviated grief
- Absent grief
- Anticipatory grief
- Collective grief
- Complicated grief
- Cumulative grief
- Delayed grief
- Disenfranchised grief

- Prolonged grief

Palliative care improves quality of life for bone marrow transplant patients

Duke Health News & Media, by Alexis Porter; 3/25/24

... Researchers tested the effectiveness of an integrated palliative care intervention across diverse settings. They enrolled 360 adults undergoing bone marrow transplants at three academic medical centers, including Duke University Hospital, *Massachusetts General Hospital* and the Fred Hutch Cancer Center at the University of Washington. ... Patients receiving the palliative care intervention reported better quality of life, defined by the degree *to which an individual is healthy, comfortable, and able to participate in life events*. They also had lower depression, PTSD and fatigue symptoms compared to those receiving usual care.



Medical marijuana patients report lasting quality of life benefits

Forbes, by A.J. Herrington; 3/25/24

Medical marijuana patients report sustained improvements in quality of life, according to the results of a recently published study. ... The results showed that many of the patients experienced improvements in physical and social functioning, energy levels and emotional well-being within the first 30 days of using medical marijuana (MMJ). Patients also reported significant decreases in pain levels, fatigue and emotional limitations.

Regulatory News

Nearly half of health systems are considering dropping Medicare Advantage plans

Becker's Hospital CFO Report, by Andrew Cass; 3/22/24

... "HFMA Health System CFO Pain Points Study 2024" is based on a survey of 135 health system CFOs conducted in January. According to the report, 16% of health systems are planning to stop accepting one or more Medicare Advantage plans in the next two years. Another 45% said they are considering the same but have not made a final decision.

Post-Acute Care News

Eisenhower Health purchases Neuro Vitality Center in Palm Springs [for new PACE Center]

InvestorsObserver, PR Newswire; 3/25/24

Made possible through generous philanthropic support, Eisenhower Health has purchased the Neuro Vitality Center (formerly the Stroke Recovery Center). In partnership with Los Angeles Jewish Health (LAJHealth), Eisenhower will provide a **Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE)** at the former Neuro Vitality Center location. After a renovation, the site is expected to open with a new name and focus in the next 12 to 18 months. "Eisenhower Health is committed to addressing the long-term health care needs for low-income seniors through this new Center and PACE program," says Martin Massiello, President and Chief Executive Officer, Eisenhower Health.

Northwell hospital nurses set strike date

Becker's Hospital Review, by Kelly Gooch; 3/22/24

Members of the New York State Nurses Association are set to strike April 2 at Staten Island University Hospital in New York City. The union represents 1,300 workers at the facility, according to an NYSNA news release. ... The union cited concerns about having enough staffing to meet the needs of the Staten Island community and contends wages are also still a key sticking point at the bargaining table. Members are seeking a contract that ensures enough experienced nurses are at the bedside to provide safe patient care.

Technology / Innovations News

5 weeks of uncertainty: How the Change breach has unfolded

Modern Healthcare, by Tim Broderick; 3/25/24

The healthcare industry is starting to play catch-up following a [cyberattack](#) on UnitedHealth Group's Change Healthcare subsidiary nearly five weeks ago that forced the company to disconnect its vital everyday systems. Change Healthcare processes about 50% of medical claims and manages prior authorization requests and reimbursement processes. The unprecedented network outage has forced hospitals, nursing homes, pharmacies and other providers to scramble as they try to mitigate operational and financial challenges. ... Here's a closer look at the fallout from the Change Healthcare cyberattack.

General News

How CoxHealth flattened nurse turnover

Becker's Health IT, by Naomi Diaz; 3/22/24

CoxHealth was able to reduce its turnover rate from around 25% to around 11%, which is more than a 50% decrease after its virtual nursing program was able to bring back the passion for its staff members. The Springfield, MO-based health system started its virtual nursing program after it was facing reduced staffing levels after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Education

USF Health College of Nursing launches new Hospice and Palliative Care Graduate Certificate Program for nurses

USF Health - University of South Florida; 3/25/24

In response to the increasing need for skilled professionals in end-of-life care, USF Health College of Nursing has launched a graduate certificate program in Hospice and Palliative Care. This program will equip registered nurses with the education, training, and clinical hours required to take the Certified Hospice and Palliative Nurse (CHPN®) exam. The USF Health College of Nursing Hospice and Palliative Care Certificate is an online training program consisting of six courses taken over three semesters.

Today's Encouragement

Teamwork: Simply stated, it is less me and more we. - Anonymous

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