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HOSPICE &
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TODAY

April 22nd, 2024

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Headlines

The impact of telemedicine on utilization, spending, and quality, 2019–22

Health Affairs, by Carter H Nakamoto, David M Cutler, Nancy D Beaulieu, Lori Uscher-Pines, Ateev Mehrotra; 4/21/24

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a dramatic increase in telemedicine use [in health systems]. Although rates have fallen subsequently, telemedicine use continues to be substantially higher than before the pandemic. ... Given concerns that telemedicine's convenience will lead to more visits, the relatively small increase in visits that we observed was surprising.

Publisher's note: The full article is currently available

at <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.2023.01142>.

Hospice Provider News

Hospice handoffs may lower odds of Medicare denials

Medscape, by Lara Salahi; 4/29/24

Clearer communication between primary care clinicians and hospice providers

may decrease the number of denied Medicare approvals for end-of-life treatment, according to a small study presented on April 18 at the American College of Physicians Internal Medicine Meeting 2024. Tyler Haussler, MD, acting medical director at Brookestone Home Health & Hospice in Carney, Nebraska, said he conducted the study. ... CMS requires a "face-to-face encounter" between a physician and hospice caregiver to communicate clinical findings and determine the patient's terminal status. Missing or incomplete documentation of a patient's medical condition remains one of the main reasons the agency denies hospice coverage.

Stanley Subaru donates over \$24k to Hospice Volunteers of Hancock County

CBS TV 5 WABI - Ellsworth, ME; by Connor Magliozzi; 4/18/24

On Thursday, Stanley Subaru presented a check worth \$24,250 to Hospice Volunteers of Hancock County. The donation is part of the Stanley Subaru 'Share the Love' Subaru Program. During [November to early January] Subaru of America as well as Stanley Subaru donates a portion of the proceeds from each new car sale. "I was just about in tears. We're a small organization. And so it really does impact our organization and the people that we serve, ..." said Kathy Baillargeon, the executive director at Hospice Volunteers of Hancock County. ... Over the last 16 years Subaru has donated \$288 million to national and local charities across the country.



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Connecticut home care safety bill would create administrative burdens, hospices say

McKnights Home Care, by Adam Healy; 4/19/24

Some hospices are fighting to be carved out of a Connecticut state bill that would impose stricter safety policies for home-based healthcare providers. The legislation's burdensome administrative requirements could affect patient care, they argue. ... The bill's introduction comes only months after a visiting nurse was killed on the job while providing care through a Connecticut home care

agency. ... By the time a hospice could produce background checks and safety reports for a client, it may be too late to provide effective treatment, according to Barbara Pearce, chief executive officer of Connecticut Hospice.

Editor's Note: For more information, see the articles we posted on 4/18/24, [After death of nurses, CT lawmakers look for solutions: 'We just cannot ignore that risk'](#), and [CT Hospice says it can't provide home care under bill to protect healthcare workers](#).

Seasons Hospice is expanding beyond Rochester

KIMT 3 News, Rochester, MN; by Saral Khare; 4/18/24

Earlier this April Seasons Hospice has already begun to provide at home hospice care to one patient in Owatonna [MN]. Seasons Hospice Executive Director, Kristina Wright-Peterson says it's important to go out to rural communities and give hospice to those who need it. Wright-Peterson says residents who get hospice can focus on what truly matters.

Help Serenity Hospice workers win their union

SEIU503; 4/18/24

Workers at Serenity Hospice have been organizing for pay equity, adequate raises, affordable health care, regular hours, PTO, and the ability to manage trauma and compassion fatigue. The workers unanimously decided to form a union, and asked management to voluntarily recognize them. Serenity's parent company (Addus Healthcare) already has SEIU-represented employees at its home health agency in Eugene. Instead, Addus hired one of the most expensive union-busting law firms in the country, and has been paying them hundreds of dollars per hour to spread anti-union propaganda. Workers are sticking together and staying strong, and plan to vote YES in their union election next week.

Editor's Note: Unions and strikes among healthcare professionals--for these same cited reasons--continue to be a growing trend, nationwide.



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Palliative Care Provider News

Being seen as a unique person is essential in palliative care at home and nursing homes: A qualitative study with patients and relatives

American Journal of Hospice and Palliative Medicine;

by Katrin Kochems, MSc, Everlien de Graaf, RN, PhD, Ginette M. Hesselmann, RN, MSc, and Saskia C. C. M. Teunissen, RN, PhD; 4/6/24

Conclusion: In both primary care and nursing home care, patients and relatives expressed the same essential elements of palliative care. They emphasized the importance of being recognized as a unique person beyond their patient status, receiving honest and clear information aligned with their preferences, and having care organized to ensure continuity. Adequate competence and skills are needed, together with a care organization that enables continuity to provide safe and person-centered care.

Clinical News

Terminally ill pediatric patients and the grieving therapist

Psychotherapy.net, by Sara Loftin, LPC-S, RPT-S; 4/18/24

A pediatric clinician shares the rewards and challenges of working with terminally ill children and their families. When asked about the favorite aspect of my (dream) job, I could talk for hours. I feel passionate about working in a pediatric hospital setting with chronically ill children and their families. Each day brings new challenges. ... Experiencing the death of a child is the most painful part of my job, and it will never make sense to me although logically, I know this happens. On the other hand, I feel honored to be a small part of the most vulnerable time in a family's life, and to walk alongside them in their journey of grief and loss. ... It has been impossible for me to not be deeply impacted working in this arena. [This article includes:]

- The Dying Child ... To Tell or Not to Tell ...
- The Dying Child's Family ... Hope vs. Denial ...
- The Challenges of Working with Dying Children ... Guilt and Perspective ... Countertransference ... Boundaries and Self-Care ... Therapist as Advocate
- Postscript

Editor's Note: C-Suite Executives, read this article to understand the profound challenges that your pediatric clinicians face, daily. Weigh these when examining pediatric care data with your more typical hospice and palliative care visits. What

professional support do you provide? Do not assume what they do or don't need. Ask. Be open to feedback. Learn. Deepen your appreciation and support for them in tangible ways.

[Unique Grief Program] Stillwater Hospice offers grief hikes

Times Union Online, Fort Wayne, IN; by Stillwater Hospice; 4/18/24

Time spent in nature has been associated with improved mental health and overall well-being. Walking and movement can be helpful in processing emotions that are a part of the grieving process. Grief hikes are designed to combine these benefits through mindful movement and immersion in nature. The Peggy F. Murphy Community Grief Center in collaboration with ACRES Land Trust will be hosting Grief Hikes on the third Friday every month from May through September. ... Each hike will be held at a different ACRES location, accessible within the Stillwater Hospice service area.



The Green Wave: Medical marijuana patient enrollment grew 610% since 2016

InvestingDaily, by John Persinos; 4/18/24

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and the University of Michigan recently issued a report about a staggering surge in enrollment in state-sanctioned medical marijuana programs across the nation. The report was published last week by the journal *Annals of Internal Medicine*. Between 2016 and 2020, the number of patients enrolled in medical marijuana programs in the U.S. grew “dramatically,” the report says, rising from about 678,000 in 2016 to more than 3 million in 2020. “This analysis indicates a 610% increase in patient number in the United States from 2016 to 2022,” the report states.

Clinician burnout and effectiveness of guideline-recommended psychotherapies

JAMA Network - Psychiatry; by Nina A. Sayer, PhD; Adam Kaplan, PhD; David B. Nelson, PhD; et al; 4/17/24

Importance: Clinician burnout has been associated with clinician outcomes, but the association with patient outcomes remains unclear.

Conclusions: This prospective cohort study suggests that clinician burnout was negatively associated with patient outcomes from evidence-based psychotherapies. Findings support research to test the hypothesis that interventions to reduce burnout may improve outcomes from guideline-recommended psychotherapies for PTSD. Future work should determine when and how burnout is associated with intervention delivery and patient outcomes.

Editor's Note: Most research on hospice and palliative clinician burnout focuses on physicians and nurses. Examine this in light of your psychosocial/spiritual professionals, i.e. social workers, chaplains/spiritual care, and bereavement counselors.

Regulatory News

Examining how improper payments cost taxpayers billions and weaken Medicare and Medicaid

HHS-OIG; by Christi A. Grimm, Inspector General, Office of Inspector General, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 4/16/24

HHS Inspector General Christi A. Grimm Testifies Before the U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations on April 16, 2024. IG Grimm briefs members on HHS-OIG's work to address improper payments in Medicare and Medicaid managed care programs.

[Click here to watch the testimony.](#)



**HOSPICE
ANALYTICS**

TURNING DATA INTO INFORMATION – TO IMPROVE PATIENT CARE

What home health providers can learn from CMS' other proposed rules for 2025

Home Health Care News, by Joyce Famakinwa; 4/19/24

... CMS released the 2025 proposed payment rules for hospice and skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) in March. On the hospice side, the proposed rule included a 2.6% increase in the per diem base rate. Aside from the pay raise for hospices, the proposal also included a market basket index update, and notable changes to some of the geographic areas subject to particular indices. "There are rural areas that became urban and urban areas that became rural in the new CBSs — core based statistical areas," William A. Dombi, president of the National Association for Home Care & Hospice (NAHC), told Home Health Care News.

5 ways the AMA is fighting for physicians in 2024

AMA - American Medical Association; by Kevin B. O'Reilly; 4/18/2024

... Physicians face far too many challenges that interfere with patient care. That's why the AMA is advocating to keep doctors at the head of the health care team, reform the Medicare physician payment system, relieve the burden of overused prior authorizations and so much more. These advocacy initiatives are part of the [AMA Recovery Plan for America's Physicians](#), which includes:

- Reforming Medicare payment.
- Fixing prior authorization.
- Fighting scope creep.
- Reducing physician burnout.
- Transforming digital health.

Public Policy News

Legislation allowing doctor-assisted suicide narrowly clears Delaware House, heads to state Senate

The Washington Post, by Randall Chase, AP; 4/18/24

A bill allowing doctor-assisted suicide in Delaware narrowly cleared the Democrat-led House on Thursday and now goes to the state Senate for consideration. The bill is the latest iteration of legislation that has been repeatedly introduced by Newark Democrat Paul Baumbach since 2015, and it is

the only proposal to make it to a floor vote. After lengthy debate, lawmakers voted 21-16 for the measure, which needed at least 21 affirmative votes for passage.

Mergers & Acquisition News

Private equity healthcare bankruptcies spiked in 2023, with more expected this year

McKnights Senior Living, by Kathleen Steele Gaivin; 4/18/24

Private equity healthcare bankruptcies hit a record high last year, with more expected this year, according to nonprofit Private Equity Stakeholder Project. "The healthcare default and bankruptcy wave is projected to continue in 2024 as companies are increasingly facing credit rating downgrades and potential defaults – and most of the companies at the highest risk are owned by private equity firms," the organization reported.

Post-Acute Care News

\$1 billion class action settlement will trigger transition of 2,400 nursing home residents to other settings

McKnights Senior Living, by Kimberly Bonvissuto; 4/19/24

The **\$1 billion settlement** of a class action lawsuit has the potential to see 2,400 Massachusetts nursing home residents move into other residential and community settings in the next decade. The options include assisted living communities, although state senior living experts say that it's unlikely many of those transitions will be to assisted living. The state agreed to settle the suit, initially filed in 2022 by six disabled nursing homes residents who argued that a lack of state resources "trapped" them in nursing homes despite their wishes to return to community-based care settings.

Technology / Innovations News

Healthcare still underprepared for scope of cyber threats, says Kroll report

Healthcare IT News, by Andrea Fox; 4/17/24

Healthcare is the industry that's most likely to self-assess as having "very mature security," according to a new cyber readiness report from Kroll. But it's also one of the most-breached sectors – topping the list in 2022 and coming in second

this past year. That discrepancy can be traced to many factors – not least the fact that healthcare organizations have long been among the [top targets](#) of cybercriminals and bad actors.

Remote access technologies expose home care firms to cybersecurity vulnerabilities, experts say

McKnights Home Care, by Adam Healy; 4/18/24

Some of the most commonly used technologies in home care are also among the easiest for criminals to exploit. ... Remote access systems include any technology that allows users to connect to and access a computer, server or network remotely. Within home care, this could be tools such as remote patient monitoring devices, secure messaging apps, telehealth platforms, cloud-based applications or systems that allow users to remotely access patient data, according to the [Department of Health and Human Services](#). And while these technologies bring efficiency, they can also expose providers and their patients to risk.

General News

States with the best health outcomes still have deep racial disparities

STAT, by Usha Lee McFarling; 4/18/24

A new analysis of health inequities in the United States shows that every state has deep racial and ethnic disparities in the performance of their health care systems. The report released Thursday by the Commonwealth Fund analyzed 25 indicators that track health outcomes, health care access, and quality of care provided for five racial and ethnic groups. It found dramatic disparities for Black, Hispanic, and Indigenous Americans, even in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Hawaii, New Hampshire, and New York — the states considered to have the best overall health care performance. In all states, White and Asian residents had the best health outcomes.

International News

Global assessment of palliative care need: Serious health-related suffering measurement methodology

Journal of Pain and Symptom Management; by Xiaoxiao J Kwete, Afsan Bhadelia, Héctor Arreola-Ornelas, Oscar Mendez, William E Rosa, Stephen

Connor, Julia Downing, Dean Jamison, David Watkins, Renzo Calderon, Jim Cleary, Joe Friedman, Liliana De Lima, Christian Ntizimira, Tania Pastrana, Pedro E Pérez-Cruz, Dingle Spence, M R Rajagopal, Valentina Vargas Enciso, Eric L Krakauer, Lukas Radbruch, Felicia Marie Knaul; 4/16/24

Inequities and gaps in palliative care access are a serious impediment to health systems especially low- and middle-income countries and the accurate measurement of need across health conditions is a critical step to understanding and addressing the issue. Serious Health-related Suffering (SHS) is a novel methodology to measure the palliative care need and was originally developed by The Lancet Commission on Global Access to Palliative Care and Pain Relief. ... The discussion encompasses opportunities for applying SHS to future policy making assessment of future research priorities particularly in light of the dearth of data from low- and middle-income countries, and sharing of directions for future work to develop SHS 3.0.

Hospice boss warns of funding challenges

BBC News, Josh Sandiford; 4/28/24

[United Kingdom] A West Midlands hospice boss has warned it faces a "huge challenge" under the current funding model. Acorns Children's Hospice, which is based in Birmingham, told the BBC the situation was not sustainable despite demand for its services growing. It came after Hospice UK said there was a £77m funding deficit at centres across the UK.

Editor's Note: We highlighted this recurring theme from the United Kingdom in posts on 4/16/24 and 4/17/24 in our "International" section. Pairing this critical, ongoing financial crisis with our article on 4/19/24, "[Will Assisted Dying in Europe Impact Living With Dignity?](#)", how might these potential losses of effective hospice care impact patients' desires for assisted dying? What similar trends are we seeing in the United States?

Today's Encouragement

Chag Pesach Kasher Vesame'ach (pronounced: CHAG PEH-sach kah-SHER ve-sah-MAY-ach) - Have a joyful and kosher Passover - Begins at sundown Monday April 22, 2024 and ends at sundown Tuesday April 30, 2024

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