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HOSPICE &
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TODAY

April 29th, 2024

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Headlines

Hospice fraud must be stopped!

Hospice Action Network; via email; 4/26/24

Across multiple states, the same story is playing out: Criminals are defrauding Medicare, getting licensed and certified to operate as hospices when they have no intent of providing care. This flagrant abuse of vulnerable patients and our healthcare system must be stopped in its tracks. We need your help! Ask your representatives to support a letter demanding answers from CMS. We need as many signatures as possible to keep the pressure on CMS. Take action **today!**

Palliative care nursing: Podcast with Betty Ferrell about ELNEC

GeriPal Podcast; by Alex Smith, Eric Widera, and Betty Ferrell; 4/26/24

As Betty Ferrell says on our podcast today, nurses play an essential role in care of people with serious illness. Who spends the most time with the patient in the infusion center? Doing home care? Hospice visits? In the ICU at the bedside? Nurses. ELNEC (End-of-Life Nursing Education Consortium) celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2025. We talk today with Betty Ferrell, who has been a nurse for 47 years, and is the founder and PI of ELNEC.

Kaiser notifies 13 million patients of breach

Becker's Health IT; by Naomi Diaz; 4/25/24

Oakland, CA-based Kaiser Foundation Health Plan is [notifying](#) current and former patients that it shared information with third-party advertisers. Kaiser Foundation Health Plan reported to the HHS' data breach portal that 13.4 million current and former patients were affected by the breach. The cause of the breach, according to an April 25 report from *Tech Crunch*, was the use of online technologies on its websites and mobile applications that "may have transmitted personal information to third-party vendors."



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Hospice Provider News

Getting your claims denied? Here are reasons why and what you can do about it

Medial Economics; by Gretchen Heinen, RN, PHN, BSN and Wael Khouli, MD, MBA; 4/25/24

A recent voluntary, [national survey](#) by Premier shed new light on denied claims. The survey, conducted from October to December 2023, revealed that nearly 15% of all claims across Medicare Advantage, Medicaid, Commercial, and Managed Medicaid are denied. Of those denied claims, 45% to 60% were overturned, albeit with a costly appeal process sometimes involving multiple appeals. ... With a skillfully crafted appeal letter, a denial can be overturned 50% to 70% of the time. In this article, we will cover denial basics, reasons for claim denials, and actions to take. It is crucial to address all potential reasons for claim denial, including: ...

Palliative Care Provider News

Palliative care's value-based future

Hospice News; by Jim Parker; 4/24/24

Many believe that the fee-for-service model does not sufficiently support a

robust palliative care program, meaning that providers must turn to value-based systems for sustainable reimbursement. But primarily, Medicare still reimburses for palliative care through fee-for-service payment programs that cover physician and licensed independent practitioner services. That model does not sufficiently cover the full range of interdisciplinary care, Dr. Julia Friedman, palliative care medical director at Thyme Care, said at the Home Health Care News Cap+Strat Conference.

Terror and LGBTQIA+ identity: Thoughts on Dr. Candrian's Newsweek reflection

Anschutz Medical School (Univ of Colorado); by Melissa C Palmer, JD LCSW ACHP-SW APHSW-C; 4/23/24

... When reflecting on the intersection of LGBTQIA+ culture, being a woman, and the medical community, I have experienced gaslighting and marginalization because of my own identity. ... During palliative care visits and assessments, we strive to be open, curious, and non-judgmental about the people we are caring for; we can be advocates for all cultural diversity including the LGBTQIA+ community.

Editor's Note: For the month of April, our newsletter's second highest most read article was "[LGBTQ+ individuals have higher rates of cancer because of disparities in modifiable risk factors, ACS says](#)," published by the Oncology Nursing Society and posted in our 4/19/24 and 4/21/24 (Sunday's "most read") issues.

Publisher's Note: Here is the link to Dr. Candrian's Newsweek article, [They wrote it off as school stress. I hid the truth out of terror](#). Thanks Carey!



Clinical News

Retired hospice worker now a hospice volunteer

Sanford Health; by Jason Anschutz; 4/25/24

"It's always been in my heart," says Nicolle Aukland of Fargo, ND. ... Aukland began her professional career as a medical social worker at MeritCare before the hospital merged with Sanford Health. She then transitioned into a similar role with Hospice of the Red River Valley. She would eventually leave the health care

industry, but her passion for hospice never left her. ... Now in retirement, Aukland dedicates her free time to hospice patients as a companionship volunteer at two different organizations, including Sanford Hospice House in Fargo.

Editor's Note: Do you encourage your retired employees to volunteer? Or perhaps retired employees from your community's other healthcare systems? They provide you with rich experience; you can provide them with meaningful volunteering. If so, be sure to orient them to the differences between their prior professional roles and the scope of practice for your organization's volunteer roles.

Regulatory News

Payment cuts are having a compounding, dire effect on the home health industry

Home Health Care News; by Andrew Donlan; 4/25/24

Home health providers' fight against cuts to fee-for-service Medicare payment has become a year-by-year battle. But the yearly cuts are compounding, which is exactly what industry advocates are trying to illustrate to Congress prior to the next payment rule proposal. ... Many of the cuts CMS has implemented are permanent, and multiple cuts on top of each other moving forward – plus unsatisfactory adjustments for inflation – are putting significant pressure on providers.

Relief provisions not enough to mitigate damage of 80/20 policy, providers say

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

Though newly finalized changes to the Medicaid Access Rule attempted to soften the blow of its controversial 80/20 provision, home care providers remained vehemently opposed to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' strict new spending mandate. "Overall, while there are many positive provisions within the final rule as well as mitigations to make the payment adequacy provision less onerous, NAHC remains extremely concerned about the negative consequences of the pass-through policy," the National Association for Home Care & Hospice said in an analysis for NAHC members released after the rule was published.



Public Policy News

Across the nation, the fight's on to protect physician-led care

American Medical Association - AMA; by Kevin B. O'Reilly; 4/25/24

After helping state medical associations and national specialty societies defeat more than 100 bills to inappropriately expand nonphysicians' scope of practice in 2023, the AMA is again relentlessly joining its allies in organized medicine to continue the fight for physician-led, team-based care in this year's legislative session. This intensive and effective advocacy effort has ranged across the country, as the AMA has helped battle scope creep in Alaska, Connecticut, Georgia, Oklahoma, New Hampshire and elsewhere.

1st state passes law to decriminalize medical errors

Becker's Hospital Review; by Erica Carbajal; 4/25/24

Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear recently signed a [bill](#) into law that shields healthcare providers from being criminally charged for medical errors, making it the first state to do so. HB 159 ensures that healthcare providers, including nurses, "shall be immune from criminal liability for any harm or damages alleged to arise from an act or omission relating to the provision of health services." It includes exceptions for negligence and intentional harm. ... In wake of [this article's cited] case, nurses and medical groups nationwide — including the American Nurses Association and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement — have [called](#) for systemwide workforce and safety reforms to focus on harm prevention, arguing that the criminalization of errors would discourage workers from reporting mistakes. ... The Kentucky Hospital Association said it supports the new law.

Death with dignity or slippery slope? [NH] Senate committee hears end-of-life bill testimony

Seacoastline, Portsmouth (NH); by Margie Cullen; 4/25/24

... The bill has sparked passions as it has made its way through the New Hampshire Legislature. It passed the House in March by just three votes. The hearing Wednesday was its first in the Senate and is likely to be its last public hearing before going to the Senate floor for a vote. The committee did not vote on whether to recommend the bill Wednesday. The bill has transcended typical party lines, with both Democrats and Republicans voting for and against the bill in the House. On Wednesday, Smith was joined by Rep. Bob Lynn, R-Windham, a cosponsor of the bill, in introducing it to the Senate committee.



Remedy or gateway drug? Doctors, police differ on path forward for medical marijuana

The State; by Anna Wilder; 4/25/24

Medical marijuana blurs lines across law enforcement and the medical community, where advocates and opponents don't agree whether it is a gateway drug or necessary medical device. With days left in the 2024 session, [South Carolina] House members are hearing from doctors, law enforcement, researchers, pharmacists and others on the highly contested issue. Out of 17 speakers at a Ad Hoc committee meeting Tuesday, eight opposed the bill, nine supported it and one was relatively indifferent.

Post-Acute Care News

E-book: "Combating loneliness in senior living residents: A call to action"

McKnights Senior Living; 4/24/24

Discover in [this] e-book:

- Effects of loneliness on senior residents' health
- Modern solutions for identifying and supporting at-risk individuals
- Innovative strategies for alleviating loneliness
- Engaging volunteers in the solution

Editor's Note: In March, one of the articles you--our readers--most read was "[Rising suicide risk among seniors due to loneliness, mobility, financial insecurity, study finds](#)," posted in our 3/7/24 and 3/17/24 (Sunday's "most read") issues.

California hospital to lay off 191 workers as it faces loss of Medicare contract

Becker's Hospital CFO Report; by Kelly Gooch; 4/24/24

Stanislaus Surgical Hospital in Modesto, Calif., which is [facing](#) a decision from CMS to end its Medicare contract, is laying off 191 employees, according to regulatory [documents](#) filed with the state April 15. The layoffs are effective April 30, the same day CMS said it will terminate the Medicare Provider Agreement with the hospital. In a notice dated April 11, the agency said it is terminating the agreement because of the hospital's noncompliance with the Medicare conditions of participation.

Novant Health launches 'hospital at home' with \$2.7M donation

Becker's Health IT; by Giles Bruce; 4/24/24

Winston-Salem, N.C.-based Novant Health [launched](#) a hospital-at-home program thanks to a \$2.7 million donation. The health system rolled out the program in March at its coastal North Carolina region, and said the ideal patient is one likely to need four days or fewer of inpatient care. ... Patients, who are monitored by technology around the clock, have 24/7 access to a remotely located registered nurse, receive at least two visits a day from paramedics, and meet virtually with a physician once daily. ... The New Hanover Regional Medical Center Foundation provided \$2.7 million to help with operational startup costs. Novant Health received a [waiver](#) from CMS for the program in 2021.

Hospital CEOs chart paths into healthcare's future

Becker's Hospital Review; by Kelly Gooch; 4/24/24

Hospital and health system CEOs understand the need to meet demand for healthcare services while also focusing on the well-being of employees and strengthening the talent pipeline. They are also focusing on healthcare education

and workforce development. Additionally, they are zeroing in on technology or partnerships that can expand capacity, help improve care and drive innovation. The innovation piece particularly resonates with Bert O'Malley, MD, president and CEO of Baltimore-based University of Maryland Medical Center.

Technology / Innovations News

Generative AI is supposed to save doctors from burnout. New data show it needs more training

STAT+; by Casey Ross; 4/25/24

After stratospheric levels of hype, early evidence may be bringing generative artificial intelligence down to Earth. A series of recent research papers by academic hospitals has revealed significant limitations of large language models (LLMs) in medical settings, undercutting common industry talking points that they will save time and money, and soon liberate clinicians from the drudgery of documentation.

General News

CC Biz Buzz: Death, taxes and planning

Columbia Daily Tribune; by Mary Dorn; 4/24/24

This column is one that I never really wanted to write, but, in hindsight, it is likely one of the most important that I will write. Monday, April 15, 2024, the dreadful "tax day" was upon me, and I was at a local funeral parlor making the final arrangements for my spouse and partner of 23 years. I kept thinking of the famous quote by Benjamin Franklin, "In this world, nothing can be said to be certain except death and taxes." ...

International News

Living well to the end: Singapore ramps up palliative and hospice care capacity

The Straits Times; by Joy Teo; 4/26/24

Singapore is increasing its palliative care and hospice capacity to allow more people with life-threatening illnesses to live well till the very end, and die with dignity and comfort. By 2025, there will be 300 inpatient palliative care beds, 140 day hospice places and capacity for palliative home care for 3,600 patients. In

Singapore, the term palliative care is often used interchangeably with hospice care, though there are subtle differences.

Other News

The Dos and Don'ts of enhanced service contracts

Specialty Pharmacy Continuum; by Marcus A. Banks; 4/25/24

... Any pharmacy that interacts with patients—an independent pharmacy, an ambulatory infusion clinic, a health system or specialty pharmacy—can enter an enhanced service contract with a pharmaceutical company. All services offered under these contracts should be documented, auditable and offered at fair prices. Before approaching the company about partnering, Mr. Suchanek advised understanding the distinction between basic and enhanced services.

... “Pharmacy leaders need to demonstrate that they are credible partners,” [David] Suchanek said [Executive Vice President for Biotech & Specialty Services at D2 Solutions].

5 hospitals seeking CEOs

Becker's Hospital Review; by Kelly Gooch; 4/22/24

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

Note: This is not an exhaustive list. Listings were compiled from job-seeker websites. Listings will be updated routinely on this page and were last updated April 22. ...

HCA's CEO-to-worker pay ratio over the past 5 years

Hospital CFO Report; by Andrew Cass; 4/22/24

Nashville, TN-based HCA Healthcare CEO Sam Hazen was paid between 254 and 556 times more than the health system's median employee since becoming the health system's chief executive in 2019, according to proxy statements filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission. ... Here is how the ceo-to-median-worker pay ratio has changed the past five years: ...

Today's Encouragement

Life is like riding a bicycle: to keep your balance you must keep moving. - Albert Einstein

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