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**HOSPICE &
PALLIATIVE CARE
TODAY**

May 1st, 2024

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Headlines

Minnesota's new labor board votes for nearly \$23.50 an hour minimum wage for nursing home workers

Minnesota Reformer; by Max Nesterak; 4/29/24

'Today has been a long time coming,' said nursing home worker Nessa Higgins at a news conference after Minnesota's first labor standards board voted on April 29, 2024, to raise the minimum wage for nursing home workers to \$20.50 per hour by 2027. Minnesota's new workforce standards board took its first significant vote on Monday, agreeing to raise the pay floor to \$23.49 per hour on average in 2027 for nursing home workers, while guaranteeing 11 paid holidays. The worker and government representatives on the board approved the minimum wages without the support of the board's nursing home industry representatives, who abstained.

Hospice Claims Edits for Certifying Physicians

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS); Related CR Release Date 4/18/24;

Effective Date: 5/1/24; Implementation Date: 10/7/24

Related CR Title: Additional Implementation Edits on Hospice Claims for Hospice Certifying Physician Medicare Enrollment

Starting May 1, 2024, we'll deny hospice claims if the certifying physician, including hospice physician and hospice attending physician, isn't on our PECOS hospice ordering and referring files. This addresses hospice program integrity and quality of care per Section 6405 of the Affordable Care Act.

Affected Providers

- Hospices
- Physicians and other providers billing Medicare Administrative Contractors (MACs) for hospice services they provide to Medicare patients

Action Needed

- CMS will pay for hospice services if certifying physicians, including hospice physicians and hospice attending physicians, are enrolled in or opted-out of Medicare
- The hospice attending and certifying physicians will be subjected to ordering and referring denial edits

HHS issues new rule to strengthen nondiscrimination protections and advance Civil Rights in health care

HHS Press Office; 4/26/24

Today, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office for Civil Rights (OCR) and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a final rule under Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) advancing protections against discrimination in health care. By taking bold action to strengthen protections against discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, and disability, this rule reduces language access barriers, expands physical and digital accessibility, tackles bias in health technology, and much more.

Hospice Provider News

On the Scene: Suncoast Hospice Foundation Gala

Tampa Bay Business & Wealth; by Jo-Lynn Brown; 4/26/24

The Suncoast Hospice Foundation held its 22nd annual gala, at The Vinoy Resort and Golf Club, in St. Petersburg. The foundation raised more than \$346,000 at this year's sold-out event, surpassing previous records of fundraising.

Harmony House of Western Massachusetts unveils new home for terminally ill

WWLP TV 22 News; by Kayleigh Thomas; posted 4/26/24, updated 4/27/24

[Chicopee, MA] After a long hiatus, the Harmony House of Western Massachusetts unveiled its new home for the terminally ill. It comes after the original home closed in 2019 before Covid-19 hit. Once the pandemic began, plans to renovate the new home were put on hold. Now, they're completely renovated with a fully staffed team to offer companionship, meals, laundry services, and personal and spiritual care.

Five lessons I have learned in my first year as a hospice CEO

Sussex World, UK; by Jasmine Cotton; 4/29/24

We spoke to Lois Howell, Chief Executive Officer at St Wilfrid's Hospice in Chichester, about the top five lessons she has learnt in her first year as a hospice CEO. ... "I started my role as Chief Executive Officer at St Wilfrid's Hospice, Chichester on March 27, 2023. Prior to this, I worked as the Director of Governance and Risk at the NHS Trust on the Isle of Wight ... These are five things I have learnt in my first year as CEO of a local hospice, ..."

1. People don't realise how much they value hospice care until they need it. ...
2. Charity retail is amazing! ...
3. As a local hospice we should be a good neighbor in the community ...
4. We couldn't run our services without volunteers ...

5. Our expert care is excellent, and it shouldn't be overshadowed by the fabulous stuff ...



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The value of hospice-emergency department collaboration

Hospice News; by Jim Parker; 4/29/24

Fostering greater collaboration between hospices and hospice emergency departments can help reduce health care costs, generate revenue and improve patient outcomes. Reducing hospitalizations and emergency department (ED) visits are key goals for many health care stakeholders, particularly those that operate within a value-based environment. ... Nearly 40 million seniors visit the ED annually, according to the Institute for Healthcare Policy and Innovation at the University of Michigan. For patients, however, the ED may not always be the best option, Rebeka Malloy, director of clinical engagement for Compassion and Choices, said at the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization's (NHPCO) Virtual Interdisciplinary Conference. ...

Millions of American kids are caregivers now: 'The hardest part is that I'm only 17'

The Wall Street Journal; by Clare Ansberry; 4/27/24

An estimated 5.4 million children help care for relatives, as families can't afford or find other in-home care. ... Leo Remis goes to high school, plays videogames, and helps take care of his disabled mom. ... More than 70% of young caregivers are caring for a parent or grandparent, according to a caregiving report. Many miss school, feel more isolated and worry about the future. Juggling homework with cooking and giving injections can be overwhelming and lead to anxiety.

Editor's Note: Access to this article might require a subscription. [Click here for alternate access.](#)

Clinical News

OSF launches new tools to help make end-of-life planning easier

News25, Peoria, IL; by Liz Lape; 4/26/24

OSF Healthcare reports that thousands of patients are dying in medical facilities without end-of-life care plans. ... Sarah Overton, Chief Officer of Nursing, describes that studies show that over 70% of patients would prefer a setting other than a hospital to spend their last moments, like at home hospice or palliative care. OSF has launched self-service resources such as an Advanced Careplanning page and Patient Questionnaire on their app MyChart. Overton says the goal is to make end-of-life care planning more available to the public.



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Mergers & Aquisition News

Vitas bullish on hospice, palliative care acquisitions following Covenant deal

Hospice News; by Holly Vossel; 4/25/24

Chemed Corp. ... subsidiary Vitas Healthcare is ramping up its strategic growth plans in both hospice and palliative care amid rising demand for these services. Vitas earlier this month **completed** its \$85 milli on acquisition of Covenant Health and Community Services' hospice operations and one assisted living facility location. Announced in March, the deal marked the company's first purchase in several years. More transactions are on the horizon amid changes in the marketplace and increased clinical capacity, according to Vitas Chairman and CEO Nick Westfall.

Signify Health President: 'We're just scratching the surface' on what can be done in the home

Home Health Care News; by Andrew Donlan; 4/26/24

Signify Health was purchased by CVS Health for \$8 billion in March 2023. Now, it's one of the core tenants of CVS Healthspire, the health care services segment that CVS executives are banking on to drive future growth for the company. Paymon Farazi, the president of Signify Health, recently joined Home

Health Care News&rs quo; Disrupt podcast to talk about Signify's direction over a year after the CVS deal was closed, how the company could work with traditional home-based care providers in the future and where Farazi sees Signify – and health care – headed in the near- and long-term future.

Post-Acute Care News

Policymakers should support patients over profits in Louisiana

Louisiana Illuminator; by Kathy Oubre; 4/29/24

... The need for more affordable access to treatment and care is not only real for cancer patients, but also for all Louisianans, with *U.S. News and World Report* ranking Louisiana in the bottom five states for health care in the country. ... [LA] Senate Bill 347 would require pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) and insurance companies to share the savings they receive from negotiated rebates and discounts directly with patients at the point-of-sale, lowering out-of-pocket costs. These rebates and discounts are significant, totaling over \$230 billion in 2021 alone.



Penn State Hershey Medical Center nurses ratify new contract

NBC WGAL TV 8; by Lori Has More; 4/27/24

More than 2,000 registered nurses working at Penn State Hershey Medical Center have ratified a new three-year contract. The union says their new deal will increase pay rates by an average of 22.5%, include more time off and new initiatives to address staffing needs.

Editor's Note: These changes reflect national trends for recent healthcare strikes and high turnover rates: pay rates, work-life balance, and staffing. Additionally, we're

seeing demands for improved workplace safety as a common theme for healthcare professionals.

Technology / Innovations News

How will AI affect care? Let us count the ways

McKnights Senior Living; by John O'Connor; 4/25/24

A new report from the editors at *Health IT Analytics* describes a dozen leading areas where changes will take place. The top three are especially germane to the senior living and care sector. Leading the charge is clinical decision support. ... Following closely is the integration of AI in drug discovery and development. ... Rounding out the top three are electronic health records. ...

FTC finalizes changes to data privacy rule to step up scrutiny of digital health apps

Fierce Healthcare; by Heather Landi; 4/26/24

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) finalized a rule Friday that aims to tighten the reins on digital health apps sharing consumers' sensitive medical data with tech companies. The agency issued a final version of its revised Health Breach Notification Rule to underscore the rule's applicability to health apps in a bid to protect consumers' data privacy and provide more transparency about how companies collect their health information.



TURNING DATA INTO INFORMATION – TO IMPROVE PATIENT CARE

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AMA responds to UnitedHealth confirmation of stolen data from Change Healthcare

American Medical Association; 4/24/24

The American Medical Association (AMA) is deeply concerned about the April 22 [announcement](#) from UnitedHealth Group (UHG) indicating vast amounts of

sensitive medical data might have been stolen from Change Healthcare's system and in the hands of malicious ransomware groups. "The AMA appreciates UHG's statement outlining efforts to contain damage and provide support for people who are concerned about their personal data," said AMA President Jesse M. Ehrenfeld, M.D., M.P.H. "The AMA urges UHG to quickly operationalize and fulfill its promises to help patients and physicians affected by the breach."

General News

America's graying. We need to change the way we think about age.

The Harvard Gazette; by Alvin Powell; 4/25/24

Experts say instead of disability, focus needs to shift to ability, health, with greater participation, economically and socially. People in their 70s, 80s, and even 90s run marathons, write books, and go to work daily. But the predominant national conversation on aging focuses on disability rather than ability, something experts say is a problem as participation of America's older adults grows more important, economically and socially, as the nation ages.

Living our lives – and planning for the inevitable

Forbes; by Naomi Cahn; 4/28/24

More than half of those with at least \$100,000 in investable assets and who have retired – or are planning to do so – do not yet have an estate plan, according to an April 2024 Ameriprise [re port](#). ... Recent news about advance medical planning, retirement stability and estate planning show that few are prepared. Approximately two of every three adults do not have an advance directive, a plan in place for when they are incapacitated or need end-of-life decisionmaking.

Editor's Note: Hospice and palliative executive leaders, are your advance directives in place? If not, what conversations and decisions are you avoiding? Ask some seasoned clinicians what kinds of patient/family situations they have experienced when advance directives were not ready; and potential conflicts that were diverted because of previous decisions and documents.

Art exhibition held to honor hospice patient

KTVN 2 News Nevada; by Jake Reno; 4/27/24

Robert Henry, who has always dreamed of showcasing his artwork, was very overwhelmed and happy to see all of the people who came to see his work. Compassion Care Hospice and the Nevada Fine Arts held an art exhibition to

honor Robert Henry, a hospice patient ... After members of the hospice care team found out more about Henry's story and how much art meant to him, they were inspired to figure out a way to honor him and his life's passion.

WHIAANHPI and SmithsonianAPA unveil joint theme for 2024 Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month: 'Bridging Histories, Shaping Our Future'

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; by HHS Press Office; 4/24/24

Today, the White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (WHIAANHPI) and the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center are proud to present our joint 2024 theme for Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AA and NHPI) Heritage Month: "Bridging Histories, Shaping Our Future." The 2024 theme is an homage to our ancestors and invites all Americans to delve into the legacies, triumphs, and challenges that have shaped AA and NHPI communities. It embodies the spirit of our collective journey – one rooted in resilience and hope – and encourages us to forge intergenerational connections to honor our past and pave a durable path forward.

Non-print News

A hospice doctor on deathbed visions #shorts #tedx

Tedx Talks; by Dr. Christopher Kerr; 4/29/24

"When it comes to end-of-life experiences, most of the reports were based on anecdotal reporting. In other words, nobody had asked patients directly or attempted to quantify or measure. So that's what we've done. What we found is that the vast majority, over 80%, reported at least one pre-death dream and vision, described as more real than real and distinct from normal dreaming.

Other News

6 top execs that have recently left Optum

Becker's Payer Issues; by Jakob Emerson; 4/23/24

In 2024, at least six top executives previously with UnitedHealth Group's Optum have announced their departures for new positions with companies across the country. [Click on the title's link for names positions.] Optum executive departures in 2023 are [here](#).

Today's Encouragement

May, more than any other month of the year, wants us to feel most alive. -
Fennel Hudson

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