

Cordt Kassner

From: Hospice & Palliative Care Today Newsletter
<subscriptions@hospicepalliativecaretoday.com>
Sent: Sunday, June 23, 2024 4:00 AM
To: Cordt Kassner
Subject: Your Hospice & Palliative Care Today Newsletter for 06/23/24

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TODAY**

June 23rd, 2024

Sunday newsletters focus on headlines and top read stories of the last week (in order) - enjoy!

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Headlines

[MedPAC releases June 2024 report on Medicare and the health care delivery system](#)

MedPac - Medicare Payment Advisory Commission; Press Release; 6/13/24

The Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) released its June 2024 Report [on June 13, 2024] to the Congress: Medicare and the Health Care Delivery System. Each June, as part of its mandate from the Congress, MedPAC reports on improvements to Medicare payment systems, issues affecting the Medicare program, and changes to health care delivery and the market for health care services. This year's report covers the following topics:

- Approaches for updating clinician payments and incentivizing participation in alternative payment models. ...
- Provider networks and prior authorization in Medicare Advantage. ...
- Assessing data sources for measuring health care utilization by Medicare Advantage enrollees: Encounter data and other sources. ...
- Paying for software technologies in Medicare. ...

- Considering ways to lower Medicare payment rates for select conditions in inpatient rehabilitation facilities. ...
- Medicare's Acute Hospital Care at Home program. ...

The full report is available at MedPAC's website (<http://www.medpac.gov>).

Mental distress, depression, drug deaths increasing among older adults

Becker's Behavioral Health; by Rylee Wilson; 6/7/24

Rates of mental distress and other behavioral health conditions are on the rise among older adults, according to [America's Health Rankings 2024 Senior Report](#). The annual report, published by UnitedHealth Group, ranks states on over 50 dimensions of health.

June is Adult Protection Awareness Month

KREX Grand Junction (CO); by Jessica Livingstone; 6/8/24

June is Adult Protection Awareness Month, and Mesa County kicked this month off by tying purple ribbons around their campus to show their support for the victims. WesternSlopeNow talked to HopeWest about the resources they have to protect the community. If you'd like to know more information about HopeWest's resources, you can call or click [here](#).

Publisher's Note: How is your hospice participating in Adult Protection Awareness Month?



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Celebrate CNA Week Toolkit: June 13-19, 2024

NAHCA - The CNA Association; retrieved from the internet 6/14/24

This year, CNA Week is from June 13th to June 19th. With the theme of "We'll Be There For You," NAHCA created this toolkit for CNAs and for the skilled nursing centers, assisted living communities, and staffing and home health agencies they work for so that everyone can celebrate, recognize, and pay their respects to the incredible work that the nearly 1 million-strong contingent of frontline heroes

does everyday for elders and people with disabilities.

Editor's Note: We apologize for the late date of this notice, as it has not been showing up in our many newsfeeds. That fact illustrates how healthcare leadership neglects our valued Certified Nursing Assistants, too often. What are you doing to celebrate your CNAs? Here are a few hospice examples we found:

- [Ascend Hospice Care, Greater Houston area and parts of southeast Texas - "National Certified Nursing Assistants Week 2024"](#)
- [Healing Care Hospice, southern California - "National CNA Week"](#)
- [Oklahoma Palliative & Hospice Care - "Celebrating the Heart and Dedication of Nursing Assistants in Hospice Care"](#)
- [Paradiagm Health, Indianapolis, IN - "CNA Week: Every day is an opportunity to make a difference"](#)

Spousal caregivers need emotional support before losses, not just after, study finds

McKnight's Long-Term Care News; by Donna Shryer; 6/9/24

A [recent study](#) suggests that healthcare professionals and policymakers should expand their focus on supporting the emotional well-being of individuals whose spouses have dementia, especially in the years leading up to their partners' deaths. The clinical investigation, published in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, indicates that these caregivers experience heightened levels of psychological distress compared to those whose partners have normal cognitive function. ... After the partner's death, the levels of loneliness and depression were similar across all groups, regardless of the deceased partner's cognitive status. This suggests that the period before the loss is particularly challenging for those caring for a spouse with dementia. Furthermore, about two-thirds (64%) of these spouses reported lower life satisfaction compared to nearly three-quarters (74%) of those with cognitively healthy partners. However, the study found no significant difference in social isolation levels among the groups.

Ransomware spikes after Change hack

Becker's Health IT; by Naomi Diaz; 6/13/24

Following Change Healthcare's admission that it paid off hackers after its ransomware attack, there has been a spike in healthcare-related cyber incidents, [Wired](#) reported June 12. In April, cybersecurity firm Recorded Future identified 44 instances of cybercriminal groups targeting healthcare

organizations with ran somware attacks. These attacks involved stealing data, encrypting systems and demanding ransom payments while holding networks hostage. This marks the highest number of healthcare ransomware victims recorded in a single month during Recorded Future's four years of data collection, Allan Liska, a threat intelligence analyst at the company told *Wired*.



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Revenue pressures driving home care consolidation, private equity's growing influence, provider group says

McKnight's Home Care; by Adam Healy; 6/11/24

Pressures such as insufficient government reimbursement and rising Medicare Advantage penetration are contributing to consolidation in home care and hospice, LeadingAge told regulators last week in response to a February request for information surrounding healthcare market competition. "Sustainable fee-for-service rates that cover the continually rising costs of delivering care are of critical importance," LeadingAge said. "Outside revenue pressures such as lower reimbursement rates from managed care plans, reduced units of service through accountable and managed care organizations, and an increasing need to be an organization of a certain size in order to contract with managed care organizations and accountable care organizations are also factors that drive consideration of consolidation options." One particular concern, LeadingAge noted, is the growing investment in healthcare by private equity firms. Private equity firms have driven a significant share of home care and hospice consolidation in recent years. PE firms had a hand in 35 home health deals, 15 personal care deals and 13 hospice deals last year, according to a recent report.

And studies have shown that patients receiving care from PE-owned providers may experience worse health outcomes than patients at nonprofit agencies.

End of pandemic internet subsidies threatens a health care lifeline for rural America

KFF Health News; by Sarah Jane Tribble; 6/5/24

Myrna Broncho is standing outdoors beside a wooden fence that lines a large, open field on a sunny day. Since signing up for the Affordable Connectivity Program last year, Myrna Broncho's internet bill has been fully paid by the discount. The program provided \$75 discounts for internet access in tribal or high-cost areas like Broncho's, but it is out of money.

When your parents die: Becoming an adult orphan

The Montecito Journal; by Deann Zampelli; 6/18/24


Shortly after I got married, my 64-year-old mother lost her battle with breast cancer. Seven years later my father joined her. The loss isn't any less painful just because you are a grown-up. ... Many don't realize that grief isn't linear. We don't go through a neat little phase, checking off each stage as we complete it. The famous (and somewhat debunked) five stages of grief introduced by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in the 1960s (Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, Acceptance) were from a study she did on the emotional states of patients who were dying. It was their stages she was referencing, not ours. ... I came to a frightening realization. ... It suddenly dawned on me that my siblings and I were next in line to kick it. [Click on the title's link to continue reading.]

*Editor's Note: While serving in your hospice leadership roles, you experience the ongoing aging, changes and likely even deaths of your own family members, friends, and mentors. Do you, your hospice communications, and/or your grief services rely on the outdated "Stages of Grief" model? These "stages" opened the door in the 1960's for talking about death and dying, but became extremely misused and overpopularized for persons **surviving** the loss. Learn, update your knowledge, information, and clinical bereavement practices with extensive bereavement/loss/grief research, clinical best practices, and more. For expert information, resources, and bereavement professionals, examine www.adec.org, the Association for Death Education and Counseling.*



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CMS - Roadmap to Better Care: Tribal Version

CMS; 6/17/24

This version of the Roadmap has been updated to help members of the American Indian and Alaskan Native community connect to their health care, including benefits provided through the Indian Health Service (IHS), Medicare, Medicaid, Marketplaces, or private insurance. Unlike Medicare, Medicaid, the IHS is not an insurance program or an established benefits package. IHS cannot guarantee funds are available each year, and as a result sometimes needs to prioritize patients of greatest need. The preservation of legacy, heritage, and traditions is vital. This roadmap is designed to help sustain cultural richness and strengthen the well-being of present and future American Indian and Alaska Natives for generations. To learn more about enrollment in Marketplace, Medicare, or Medicaid see pages 4 and 5 or visit ihs.gov/forpatients.

Bluegrass Care Navigators and Hosparus Health announce landmark affiliation agreement

Hosparus Health Press Release; 6/17/24

Today marks a significant milestone as Bluegrass Care Navigators and Hosparus Health announced that their respective boards of directors have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to begin working toward a formal

affiliation between the two organizations. The affiliation is rooted in the organizations' shared mission of providing compassionate, high-quality care to those facing serious illness and end-of-life. It aims to enhance service delivery, improve operational efficiencies, and bolster long-term sustainability — all while preserving the unique identities and local operations of both organizations. David Cook, Hosparus Health President and CEO, said, "This formal affiliation is designed to strengthen and improve resiliency for our organizations. Rest assured, we will continue to honor and maintain the distinct identities and local presence that our communities have come to cherish. This affiliation is a testament to our shared commitment to working together and enhancing care for our communities." "Both Bluegrass Care Navigators and Hosparus Health share a joint mission: to provide exceptional, compassionate, high-quality care to those facing frailty, serious illness and end-of-life," added Liz Fowler, President and CEO of Bluegrass Care Navigators. "Our long histories of service, innovation, and excellence make this affiliation a natural and exciting next step." *[Click on the title's link to read more.]*

Top News Stories of the Month May 2024 - TCN Podcast

TCN Talks - Teleios Collaborative Network; Mark Cohen, Cordt Kassner and Joy Berger; 6/13/24

In this week's podcast, Mark Cohen, Cordt Kassner, and Joy Berger discuss the top news stories in the Hospice community for the month of May. Additionally, they take you behind the scenes of how newsletters like [Hospice News Today](#) was assembled each day and how Hospice & Palliative Care Today is produced for your leadership to use, each day.



Dangerous heat puts tens of millions in the US on alert; paired with NIH & OSHA resources for you to protect patients and employees

Associated Press article, paired with information and resources from NIH and OSHA; 6/18/24

- **AP: Dangerous heat puts tens of millions in the US on alert. New York activates the National Guard.** Extreme heat alerts affected tens of millions of people in the United States on Tuesday as cities including Chicago broke records at the start of a week of sweltering weather. States in the Midwest started to bake Monday in what the National Weather Service called a dangerous and long duration heat wave that was expected to stretch from Iowa to Maine into at least Friday.
- **NIH: Hot weather safety for older adults.** *National Institute for Health. Use this information and resources to protect the elderly patients you serve.*
- **OSHA: Heat - Working in outdoor and indoor heat environments.** *OSHA - Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Use this extensive information and these resources to protect your employees and volunteers.*

Hospice staff cycle more than 300 miles to work

VNExplorer - bbc.com; 6/13/24

Hospice staff have collectively cycled more than 300 miles this week to raise money for their place of work. Seven St Margaret's Hospice employees cycled to work on Tuesday morning to mark Bike Week. ... The group raised £1,000 for the Taunton hospice, which they say could pay for 24 hours of expert specialist care on its inpatient unit, with donations still coming in. ... The idea for the challenge began with senior IT technician, Jack Gorman, whose colleagues had been encouraging him to cycle to work more often. Tom White, head of business intelligence, challenged Mr. Gorman that if he cycled to and from work - a 50-mile commute to work and back - then Mr. White would cycle in from his Barnstaple home, a round trip of 100 miles. ...

Editor's Note: Does this spark ideas for your organization, especially for your office-based staff? Take this and adapt it to a fun, practical, revenue-generating, relationship-building activity for your organization.

It's your funeral! How to plan ahead for the best party you'll never attend

The Guardian; by Doosie Morris; 6/14/24

Years before the indomitable Joan Rivers died in 2014 she immortalised [hopes](#)

for her own farewell in her memoir. ... The rise in so-called “death positivity”, along with the mortal reality check wreaked on us by the pandemic, has helped to reframe death as a part of life for many of us. Taboos around discussing death are breaking down and planning your own funeral is increasingly considered as responsible as writing a will. ... While the latest Australian Funeral Industry report found less than one in five Australians have actually planned their own funeral, a definite vibe shift is occurring and 90% of people say they want to. ... “When people say ‘I don’t want a funeral’ I remind them it’s not actually for them,” Griffith says. “You might think you’re doing your loved ones a favour, but you are actually denying everyone who needs somewhere to put their grief.” ...



TURNING DATA INTO INFORMATION – TO IMPROVE PATIENT CARE

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CMS: Home healthcare spending estimated to grow by 7.1 percent from 2025 to 2026, surpassing other sectors

McKnight's Home Care; by Adam Healy; 6/12/24

National spending on home healthcare is projected to grow faster than any other health sector in the years ahead, according to newly published data from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' Office of the Actuary [see Health Affairs: [National Health Expenditure Projections, 2023-32: Payer Trends Diverge As Pandemic-Related Policies Fade](#)]. Between 2025 and 2026, national spending on home health care is expected to increase by 7.1%, a data analysis published Wednesday in Health Affairs revealed. Projected spending growth in home health care should outpace all other categories including hospital care services (4.9%), physician and clinical services (4.8%) and nursing homes care (4.8%), and it is expected to grow even faster during the following years. Between 2027 and 2032, the sector will see spending growth of 8.1%, compared to hospital spending (5.6%), physician and clinical services (5.5%) and nursing home care

(6%). In 2022, home health spending increased by roughly 6%, CMS disclosed in a previous report.

Today's Encouragement

When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace. ~Jimi Hendrix

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