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Headlines

Mayo Clinic Minute: How extreme heat, humidity affect your health

News Tribune; by Tribune News Service; 7/16/24

Many parts of the U.S. continue to grapple with oppressive heat and humidity. This can prevent the body from cooling down, increasing the risk of heat cramps, exhaustion and heatstroke. Dr. Jesse Bracamonte, a Mayo Clinic family medicine physician, said the extreme heat and high humidity can be a dangerous mix. "High heat and high humidity can place one at risk for serious illness if people aren't careful. The heat can affect people's bodies by increasing the core body temperature and ability to sweat, and cause dehydration that can cause further medical problems and ensuing issues, and eventually can lead to heat exhaustion, in some cases, severe heat illness, known as heatstroke," Bracamonte said.

Editor's Note: What information and support are you providing for your clinicians who travel between visits and for your patients who might be affected by extreme heat and humidity? What simple, practical adaptations might you create, like disposable water bottles for staff as they leave your building (with a sign of support and basic info)?

Hospice Provider News

Married 'soulmates' spent final days side by side

BBC News, United Kingdom; by Isaac Ashe; 7/13/24

Two married "soulmates" who died from terminal cancer within days of each other were able to spend their last moments together side by side. Chris and Lynne Johnson, from Bolsover in Derbyshire, had been married for 52 years before both were diagnosed with cancer and eventually moved to Ashgate Hospice in February. The hospice arranged for the pair's beds to be placed in the same room, allowing them to hold hands in Mrs Johnson's final moments. Eight days later, Mr Johnson then died with his brother Alwyn and the couple's pet dog Tess by his side. ... Their daughter, Julie Whittaker, has decided to now share the story and is now calling on the government to review funding so more people can access end-of-life services. "Not only do all people deserve the end-of-life care that my parents received, but when patients are in a hospice instead of a hospital, it takes the strain off the NHS [National Health Services, UK]."

Streamlining financial processes in end-of-life care: The crucial role of revenue cycle management for hospices

United Business Journal - UBJ; by Rahul Kumar; 7/16/24

In the increasingly complex healthcare landscape, hospices face unique challenges in managing their financial processes. One crucial aspect that significantly impacts their efficiency and sustainability is Revenue Cycle Management (RCM) for hospices. This blog post aims to shed light on the essential role of RCM for hospices in streamlining financial operations, ensuring they can continue to provide compassionate and high-quality end-of-life care.

AccentCare unveils new hospice care center in Miami-Dade County

accentCare, Miami, FL; 7/10/24

AccentCare, a nationwide leader in home health, hospice and personal care services, ... announced the opening of a new inpatient hospice center in Miami. Expanding its footprint in South Florida, AccentCare's new facility aims to address the region's diverse population and growing need for greater access to personal and high-quality hospice care. "We are thrilled to expand our presence in the Miami area, offering compassionate and personalized hospice care for more patients and their families in Florida's diverse communities," said Andy Johnston, President of Hospice & Personal Care Services, AccentCare. ... AccentCare's new 30,000-square-foot hospice center offers a range of services, including nursing care, pastoral care, medical social work, respite services, 24-hour critical home care and bereavement support for families.

Palliative Care Provider News

Palliative care is underutilized in nursing homes

EurekaAlert! AAAS; by Regenstrief Institute; 7/16/20

Palliative care, specialized medical care focusing on providing relief from the symptoms -- including pain -- and the stress of serious illness, is underutilized in nursing homes, despite the large number of nursing home residents living with a serious illness such as cancer, dementia, Parkinson's disease, heart failure or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. A qualitative study, published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, analyzes lack of palliative care referrals for nursing home residents and proposes ways to address this healthcare gap. In addition to examining existing referral patterns, the authors

explore recommendations for ideal criteria and create a substantive framework for palliative care referrals in nursing homes.

*Editor's Note: You can access the article here, "[Palliative care in nursing homes: A qualitative study on referral criteria and implications for research and practice](#)" is published in *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*.*

In response to 'Garnet lays off 26 people citing cost savings'

Warwick Advertiser, Letters to the Editor; by Ethel Hemsji; 7/15/24

For the past seven years I have been a volunteer with the Palliative Care team at Garnet Health Hospital. The whole team has been laid off to save costs. The article says it can be replaced by the hospitalist team of internal medicine providers. In my opinion this team can in no way be replaced by other doctors. Palliative care is a very complex and respectable practice in itself with specially trained doctors and nurses. It does much more than manage a patient's pain. The palliative care providers are focused on helping patients and their families understand the patient's condition and come together to make important decisions that patients with serious illnesses face. This includes weighing the pros and cons of various medical treatments as they pertain a patient's quality of life. ...

Clinical News

Targeted palliative care enhances outcomes in advanced cancer

Physician's Weekly; 7/15/24

... Excessive polypharmacy is common in patients with cancer, especially older adults. According to a 2023 study published in [Cancer](#), up to 80% of older patients take five or more medications, and up to 40% take 10 or more. Patients who receive numerous medications as part of supportive care may be at increased risk for potentially inappropriate medications and drug-drug interactions, which could impact their QOL. The study authors emphasized the importance of meaningful screening and interventional tools to optimize the use of medications for palliative care in these patients. In [a more recent study](#) published in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, Giusti Raffaele, MD, and colleagues aimed to streamline pharmacotherapy by targeting the most impactful symptom.

Advanced practice providers have an important role in kidney supportive care

Healio; by Christine Corbett, DNP, FNP-BC, CNN-NP, FNKF; 7/15/24

For more than 2 decades, nephrologists and patients have recognized the key role nephrology advanced practice providers have played in the care of patients with chronic kidney disease. ... With its attention to the psychosocial and spiritual aspects of care in addition to the physical, it is expected that nephrology nurse practitioners would also play a major role in the palliative care for patients with kidney disease. ... As part of the kidney care team, APPs [advanced practice practitioners] educate patients about kidney failure treatment options, including palliative dialysis and active medical management without dialysis. Also, nurse practitioners have been noted to play a significant role in the palliative care skills of goals-of-care conversations, advance care planning and Portable Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST, or similar term depending on the state) completion.

2 Ketamine palliative care projects explore interdisciplinary collaboration

Hospice News; by Holly Vossel; 6/29/24

Two ketamine-assisted therapy projects are examining ways to develop training and collaboration models for utilization among palliative care patient populations. A growing body of research is uncovering the potential benefits of ketamine therapies to help with symptom management. But greater understanding of the drug and its impacts is needed to help palliative care providers and other health professionals guide patient experiences, according to Dr. Michael Fratkin, board president of the Institute for Rural Psychedelic Care. Fratkin is also a palliative care specialist at Humboldt Center for New Growth.

Post-Acute Care News

Senior CommUnity Care of NKY Program announces opening of PACE senior care program

Northern Kentucky Tribune; 7/16/24

Senior CommUnity Care of Northern Kentucky is celebrating the opening of the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) serving eligible participants residing in Northern Kentucky — including Boone, Campbell, Kenton, Gallatin, Carroll, Owen, Grant and Pendleton counties. ... Senior CommUnity Care of

Northern Kentucky is a partnership of Volunteers of America National Services (VOANS) PACE Holding Company, a recognized PACE operator, and St. Elizabeth Healthcare.

General News

Rural hospitals built during Baby Boom now face Baby Bust

KFF Health News; by Tony Leys; 7/15/24

... Many of the U.S. hospitals that are now dropping obstetrics units were built or expanded in the mid-1900s, when America went on a rural-hospital building spree, thanks to federal funding from the Hill-Burton Act. "It was an amazing program," said Brock Slabach, chief operations officer for the National Rural Health Association. "Basically, if you were a county that wanted a hospital, they gave you the money."

Editor's Note: Mark Cohen has discussed the Hill-Burton Act with Chris Comeaux in their monthly [TCN Talks podcasts](#). Closures of rural hospital services continue to increase, impacting end-of-life care awareness, referrals, and utilization throughout our nation's rural areas.

Education

Pain management in the wake of the opioid crisis

Forbes; by Web Golinkin; 7/15/24

Pain is the single most frequent reason for patient visits in the United States. An estimated 20 percent of adults experience chronic pain, and nearly seven percent experience a level of chronic pain that limits their daily activities. However, most doctors and other healthcare professionals have very little education in pain management, according to Scott Fishman, MD, an internationally recognized expert in pain management, ... This lack of education was one of the main causes of the Opioid Crisis, Fishman says ... of the part of the crisis that was caused by the over-prescribing of opioids, many clinicians have become so wary of the medical-legal issues surrounding pain management that they have gone from an overly liberal approach to a restrictive one in which some prescribers are effectively abandoning patients who need to have their symptoms treated. Both extremes are frequently fueled by lack of knowledge

and training, according to Fishman. ... The solution is to close the education gap ...

International News

Hospice heart appeal in memory of teenager

BBC News, West Midlands, United Kingdom; by Andy Giddings; 7/16/24

A mother has shared the story of her "totally remarkable" daughter's final days in a hospice as she helps launch a fundraising campaign inspired by the 17-year-old. While Hannah Debney was cared for at Acorns Children's Hospice in Walsall, she made a heart shaped sculpture as a keepsake for her mother, Christine Debney. The hospice is appealing to the public to dedicate a metal heart to the memory of someone they have lost, which will form part of a display. Ms Debney said the hospice was "amazing" and added: "They allowed us as a family to be together during her final days. ... "Hannah said she wanted to tell the doctors to stop," Ms Debney said. "No-one should have to make decisions like that. It was Hannah who said she wanted to go to Acorns Children's Hospice and to be transferred there." Christine described her daughter as "the bravest person" she had ever known. Hannah died 15 days after she arrived, but while she was at Acorns she made keepsakes for her family. They included a cast of her hand in the shape of the heart for her mother, and that symbol inspired the Hannah's Hearts Appeal.

Fifth of UK hospices cutting services amid funding crisis, finds report

The Guardian, UK; by Andrew Gregory; 7/16/24

One in five hospices in the UK are cutting services amid the worst funding crisis in two decades, a report has warned, with soaring numbers of patients being pushed back into the NHS. Research by Hospice UK found "small and wildly varying" state funding had failed to keep pace with growing demand and rising running costs. That means inpatient beds are being cut, staff made redundant and community services restricted, with fewer visits to dying patients in their own homes, according to the charity, which represents more than 200 hospices across the country.

Editor's Note: Read today's previous article from the UK about a bereaved mother launching a fundraiser for the hospice that cared for her daughter. Increasingly, we see articles about creative hospice fundraisers, high amounts raised, and yet ongoing

hospice closures throughout the UK. In what ways are USA trends paving the way for similar limitations and closures ahead? Or, perhaps protecting us from cuts and closures? Use your Hospice & Palliative Care Today newsletters to stay attuned to trends and new developments that impact the services your organization provides.

Today's Encouragement

You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose. ~ Dr. Seuss, in *Oh, The Places You'll Go*



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