

Cordt Kassner

From: Hospice & Palliative Care Today Newsletter
<subscriptions@hospicepalliativecaretoday.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 8, 2024 4:00 AM
To: Cordt Kassner
Subject: Your Hospice & Palliative Care Today Newsletter for 08/08/24

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**HOSPICE &
PALLIATIVE CARE
TODAY**

August 8th, 2024

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Headlines

What drives health spending in the U.S. compared to other countries?

Peterson-KFF Health System Tracker; By Emma Wager Twitter, Shameek Rakshit, Cynthia Cox; 8/2/24

The United States spends significantly more on healthcare than comparable countries do, and yet has worse health outcomes. Much of the national conversation has focused on spending on retail prescription drugs and insurer profits and administrative costs as key drivers of health spending in the United States. The Inflation Reduction Act, signed into law by President Biden in 2022, includes several provisions aimed at lowering the cost of these prescription drugs. While it is true that many brand-name retail prescription drugs are priced higher in the U.S. than in peer countries, health spending data indicates that other spending categories – particularly hospital and physician payments – are primary drivers of the U.S.'s higher health spending. This brief examines the

drivers of health spending and differences between the U.S. and its peers – other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) nations that are similarly large and wealthy. In 2021, the U.S. spent nearly twice as much per capita on health as these comparable countries did. Most of the additional dollars the U.S. spends on health go to providers for inpatient and outpatient care. The U.S. also spends more on administrative costs, and significantly less on long-term care. [Long-term care spending includes health and social services provided in long-term care institutions such as nursing homes as well as home- and community-based settings.] ... In 2021, the U.S. spent nearly twice as much on health per person as comparable countries (\$12,197 compared to \$6,514 per person, on average).



Hospice Provider News

[Empath Health, American Health Plans launch ISNP joint venture](#)

Hospice News; by Jim Parker; 8/6/24

The nonprofit senior care provider Empath Health is partnering with the Medicare Advantage organization American Health Plans (AHP), a division of American Health Partners to serve patients who are enrolled in Institutional Special Needs Plans (ISNP). ISNPs are Medicare Advantage plans that are designed to serve beneficiaries who live in skilled nursing facilities. Through the Empath partnership, members of AHP's American Health Advantage of Florida ISNP will receive interdisciplinary services from TruHealth of Florida, the clinical arm of the ISNP. TruHealth is a newly established joint venture between AHP and Empath. Patients will also have access to Empath Health's "full-life care" model.

Notable mentions: Jonathan Fleece, Empath Health CEO.

Virginia Department of Veterans Services Veterans Care Centers utilize robotic pets for Veterans coping with dementia

Press release; 8/5/24

Six Robotic Companions Donated To Each Veterans Care Center In The Commonwealth. The Virginia Department of Veterans Services is pleased to announce that Capital Caring Health, based in Falls Church, Va., is providing companion robotic pets for veterans at the Commonwealth's veteran care centers. According to clinical studies and first-hand experience at Capital Caring Health, these companion pets have been proven to improve the quality of life of veterans and others suffering from dementia and/or loneliness. "We find that the robotic pets are very helpful in assisting with residents when they are agitated or restless," said Robyn Jennings, Administrator at Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center in Richmond. "It gives the veterans a sense of peace when holding the pets." ... "Recipients of our robotic pets usually keep them around the clock and name them," said Stephen Cone, Chief of Communications, Marketing & Philanthropy at Capital Caring Health. "Personalities of the veterans change from agitated and confused to often joyful, happy and calm – a dramatic transformation that improves the veterans' lives. I hear from families all the time how miraculous it is for their family member to have received one of these pets." These robotic companion pets are provided free of charge to any professional caregiver or family caregiver who contacts Capital Caring Health on behalf of a loved one or patient with dementia thanks to donations from individuals, companies, and foundations.

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How systems are changing compensation to attract executive talent

Modern Healthcare; by Caroline Hudson; 8/6/24

Organizations are paying higher salaries, reassessing incentives, redefining leadership roles and investing more in key positions to optimize operations, according to SullivanCotter. The firm provides data from more than 2,100 health systems, hospitals, medical groups and health plans for Modern Healthcare's 2024 Executive Compensation Survey. Here are five takeaways from the survey findings.

1. Rising base salaries reflect ongoing labor challenges.
2. Systems are realigning incentive packages as performance improves.
3. Information technology and cybersecurity executives are becoming a necessity.
4. Organizations are reassessing their structure and redefining leadership roles.
5. Leaders are going beyond compensation to cultivate internal talent.

View the [complete survey results](#).

Anonymous donation funds new HomeCare & Hospice equipment purchase

Olean Times Herald [Allegany, NY]; 8/2/24

Grants are essential for all nonprofits, and the advancement staff at HomeCare & Hospice diligently seeks grants and donations to fund items that may not be in their budget. One such item was a new patient care mannequin. The current mannequin already had served its purpose well, but was in use for 30 years. Although HomeCare & Hospice applied for a grant to cover the cost of a new medical mannequin, they were not accepted. Thankfully, a community member aware of the need made an anonymous donation to cover the \$2,500 cost.
Notable mention: Melissa Sullivan, CEO of HomeCare & Hospice.

Hospice patient and wife renew marriage vows in special silver anniversary ceremony

WDAM [MS]; By Charles Herrington; 8/3/24

Buddy and Sonja Myers celebrated 25 years of marriage with a special ceremony at Life Church. The couple renewed their vows during that ceremony. The ceremony was arranged by caregivers at ComfortCare Hospice of Laurel. Buddy Myers has cancer and is a hospice patient. "We went to the Justice of the Peace

and got married, and I still laugh at Buddy to this day because he was repeating the vows to the judge and the judge said, 'You're not marrying me, tell her,'" Sonja Myers said... The Myers were married on June 8, 2000. Sonja Myers wanted to wear a wedding dress as they planned to renew their vows. That's when caregivers at ComfortCare Hospice stepped in. "After I got to talking with the family, it came to me that (Sonja) wanted to walk down an aisle next year, at their 25th (anniversary) and so, I started contemplating for a little while and thinking about it and was like, 'We could make that happen a little early,'" said Raven Anderson, a registered nurse with ComfortCare Hospice.



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Car show rolls through Harrisburg

KELO Sioux Falls [SD]; by Darcy Andersen; 8/5/24

A parade of classic to modern cars rolled through a Harrisburg neighborhood Monday evening. It's all to help Joe Floyd celebrate his 88th birthday as he's in-home hospice care. He's long been an avid collector of classic cars. Monday's parade consisted of about 100 vehicles.

Clinical News

CMS rule will align hospitals with age-friendly care for older adults

Becker's Clinical Leadership; by Ashleigh Hollowell; 8/2/24

Starting in 2025, a new CMS measure will require public reporting on a hospital's capability to provide age-appropriate care for older adults, the agency announced Aug. 1. The measure is included as part of its FY2025 Inpatient Prospective Payment Systems final rule. Hospitals that participate in Medicare's Hospital Inpatient Quality Reporting Program must begin to report on how they

meet each element across five areas, the John A. Hartford Foundation explained via a news release shared with Becker's:

- Elicit patient healthcare goals.
- Responsibly manage medications.
- Implement frailty screening and intervention, for cognition and mobility as well.
- Assess social vulnerabilities including isolation, caregiver stress, and elder abuse.
- Designate specific leaders to oversee equitable delivery of care for older adults.

Hospitals that fail to adhere to these age-friendly care standards will face reductions in CMS funding.

Publisher's note: This story aligns with CHAP's (a newsletter sponsor) [age-friendly work in the community setting](#). If age-friendly care is now integrated into Medicare's inpatient hospital quality metrics, when will it be integrated into Medicare's hospice quality metrics?

Public Policy News

Blumenthal & Barragán introduce bicameral legislation to improve end-of-life care

Press release; 8/1/24

U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and U.S. Representative Nanette Barragán (D-CA) today introduced the Compassionate Care Act, legislation to promote advance care planning and end-of-life care. Many Americans do not have plans in place in the event they experience severe illness. In order to help patients access the care they need and that is right for them, the Compassionate Care Act provides critical resources to educate patients and providers, develop core end-of-life quality measures, and expand access to advance care planning via telehealth.



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Post-Acute Care News

Cancer care deserts are spreading

Becker's Hospital Review; by Mariah Taylor; 8/2/24

Cancer treatment deserts are growing as more rural hospitals close and cut services, CBS News reported Aug. 1. Many hospitals are discontinuing essential services, such as chemotherapy and labor and delivery, due to financial strains and staffing challenges. Between 2014 and 2022, 382 rural hospitals halted chemotherapy services, Charis, a health analytics and consulting firm, found in a report published this spring. Texas had the highest percentage of rural hospitals that eliminated chemotherapy services at 47%. Next came Alabama (46%), Mississippi (45%), Tennessee (44%), and Florida (39%).

Publisher's note: Cancer care deserts impact hospice referrals, and raise the question of "hospice deserts".

Nursing homes' high rate of Immediate Jeopardy tags warrants 'all-hands-on-deck' response

McKnight's Long-Term Care News; by Jessica R. Towhey; 8/3/24

A return to more "normal" nursing home operations in the post-pandemic world has also often meant a return to certain more serious citations, one industry expert pointed out last week. There has been a particular rise in those labeled as J or greater in scope or severity, which puts them into the Immediate Jeopardy category, she added. Survey tags citing nursing homes for accident hazards, lack of supervision, and inappropriate or misused devices (F-689) continue to run high nationwide this year. The number of Immediate Jeopardy citations on pace to either meet or exceed 2023, expert analysis shows.

General News

4 Ways servant leaders can inspire professional development in the workplace

Forbes; by Edward DeAngelis; 8/5/24

Servant leadership is very important to me. As business leaders, we strive to build natural and genuine relationships with our workforce, ideally to empower them, as people within the organization, and, in a collective sense, to demonstrate to each individual that the organization, as an entity, recognizes and appreciates...everyone. To support employee retention and performance, leaders must make engaging with their teams a priority. Employees who feel appreciated and acknowledged may not only stay with an organization and be more productive and positive, but also improve customer experiences, increased sales and profitability for the entire organization. ... Here are four ways servant leaders can inspire and support employee development.

1. Cultivate a culture of continuous learning.
2. Provide resources and mentorship.
3. Set clear expectations and collaborative goals.
4. Recognize achievements and empower everyone.

Servant leaders have the opportunity to empower their workforces to thrive and succeed, one vibrant career at a time.



Families whose loved ones were left decaying in Colorado funeral home owed \$950M, payout unlikely

AP [Denver, CO]; by Jesse Bedayn; 8/5/24

The Colorado funeral home owners who allegedly stored 190 decaying bodies and sent grieving families fake ashes were ordered by a judge to pay \$950 million to the victims' relatives in a civil case, the attorney announced Monday. The judgment is unlikely to be paid out since the owners, Jon and Carie Hallford, have been in financial trouble for years. They also face hundreds of criminal charges in separate state and federal cases, including abuse of a corpse, and allegations they took \$130,000 from families for cremations and burials they never provided.

Other News

Today's Heartwarming Story [Northern Illinois hospice patient takes the ride of his life]



Today's Encouragement

Are you going to stand or are you going to crumble? In the face of everything, stand still. ~Gabby Douglas, American gymnast and three-time gold medalist





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