

## Cordt Kassner

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## August 26th, 2024

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## Headlines

### **Fraudulent hospices reportedly target homeless people, methadone patients to pad census**

*Hospice News; by Jim Parker; 8/23/24*

Fraudulent hospices in California reportedly have been targeting homeless people and methadone patients, promising them a steady supply of opioids in exchange for enrolling in hospice. Three hospice leaders came forward to Hospice News to report these practices. According to their reports, unscrupulous providers have canvassed both homeless encampments and methadone clinics seeking to sign up patients who are not terminally ill. In many cases, the sources said, these operators offer patients free access to board-and-care facilities and a daily supply of morphine. Another frequent practice among these hospices is to offer patients cash or other items in addition to drugs, they said. "This conduct raises serious fraud concerns on kickbacks or gifts to beneficiaries who do not appear to qualify for hospice," Bill Dombi, president of the National Association

for Home Care & Hospice (NAHC), told Hospice News. "More importantly, this conduct is predatory, taking advantage of individuals in addiction. Jail time is not enough punishment for the harm that such conduct creates."

*Editor's Note: We are reposting this from our Saturday 8/24 issue, to ensure our weekday readers see it. This is abhorable. Click on the title's link to read more. While [John Oliver's "Last Week Tonight"](#) episode on 8/18/24 gained criticism from many hospice leaders, these fraudulent unethical behaviors (and others') lay the groundwork for such dire distrust from the public. These behaviors must be stopped. These persons and organizations must be held accountable.*

## Hospice Provider News

### **Dr. Joe Rotella, AAHPM: The importance of being human – Reflections of an aspiring medical humanist**

*American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine; Event Details; retrieved from the internet 8/23/24*

The Importance of Being Human - Reflections of an Aspiring Humanist

Date: September 17, 2024

Time: 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm CT

Members free; Non-Members \$49.00 USD

Come along for the September Grand Rounds Series entitled "The Importance of Being Human – Reflections of an Aspiring Medical Humanist" with Joe Rotella, MD MBA HMDC FAAHPM [AAHPM's Chief Medical Officer]. Through anecdotes, sketches, and introspective thoughts from his three decades in hospice and palliative care, Dr. Rotella will delve into the similarities between the evolution of hospice and palliative care as a discipline and his own journey as a doctor and advocate for medical humanism. Attendees will be encouraged to reflect on the impact of this work on their lives and discuss strategies for self-care and mutual support to maintain our collective mission for the future. Following his prepared speech, Dr. Rotella will open the floor for discussion and sharing with the audience.

[Click on the title's link for CME information and to register.]

*Editor's Note: Typically we do not post from the myriad of webinars available for professionals. This is different. We celebrate the career-long contributions of Dr. Joe Rotella throughout the scope of hospice and palliative care, especially as he moves into retirement. Professionally and personally, "Dr. Joe" lives and instills the title of*

*this session, "The Importance of of Being Human." I have registered. We hope you will, too.*

### **Longtime Michigan baseball coach receives quilt made of old uniforms**

*Fox2 Detroit; by Scott Wolchek; 8/22/24*

Coach Gary Szalka is now 77 years old, and is in the final stages of Parkinson's disease. He is living out the rest of his days in hospice care, but was recently surprised with a quilt made out of all of his old uniforms.



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## **Palliative Care Provider News**

### **The surprising truth about who opts for palliative care**

*Psychology Today; by Jer Clifton; 8/23/24*

A study of 407 cancer patients says palliative care is a final act of hope. Many people avoid palliative care (non-curative pain relief at end-of-life) because they see it as giving up. In past studies, two beliefs were tied to giving up: seeing the world as ugly and where little can be changed. But new study of 407 cancer patients ties wanting palliative care to seeing a beautiful and malleable world. Researchers speculate: on even the final road to death, hopeful patients may see much to cherish, even enjoy.

### **Cancer treatment 101: A primer for non-oncologists**

*Medscape; by George D. Lundberg, MD; 8/22/24*

Each year in the United States, approximately 1.7 million Americans are diagnosed with a potentially lethal malignancy. Typical therapies of choice include surgery, radiation, and occasionally, toxic chemotherapy (chemo) — approaches that eliminate the cancer in about 1,000,000 of these cases. The remaining 700,000 or so often proceed to chemotherapy either immediately or upon cancer recurrence, spread, or newly recognized metastases. ... I'm speaking in generalities, understanding that each cancer and each patient is unique. [Dr. Lundberg summarizes in user- friendly language:]

- Chemotherapy: First-line treatment ... Second-line treatment ... Third-line treatment ...
- Interventions to Consider Earlier: Molecular testing ... Palliative care ... Clinical trials ... Innovative testing ...

*Editor's Note: This primer provides basic information for non-oncology, non-medical professionals who work for your palliative care services. In this age of Medicare fraud and abuse, your business decisions must be grounded in knowledge, integrity, and expert clinical care for the patients you serve.*

## Regulatory News

### False Claims Act decisions to know from Q2 2024

*JD Supra; by Bass, Berry & Sis PLC; 8/22/24*

In case you missed it, this post recaps some key False Claims Act (FCA) decisions and case updates from the second quarter of this year. Courts weighed in on the FCA's anti-retaliation provision, its first-to-file bar, and issues around judgments and awards. ... In *U.S. ex rel. Rosales v. Amedisys, Inc.*, the relator alleged that Amedisys, a hospice operator, falsely certified patients as terminally ill and submitted claims for reimbursement to Medicare and North Carolina Medicaid for patients who were not properly eligible for hospice care. ;Amedisys filed a motion to dismiss Rosales' Amended Complaint for lack of subject-matter jurisdiction, ...

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## **St. Louis Man sentenced for home health care fraud**

*DOJ press release; 8/21/24*

U.S. District Judge Stephen R. Clark on Tuesday sentenced a man who used his brother's identity to fraudulently obtain money from the Missouri Medicaid Program to six months of incarceration and six months of house arrest. Judge Clark also ordered Christopher J. Spencer, 46, to repay \$56,173 to Missouri's Medicaid Program. Spencer made false statements from June 2018 to February 2022 in connection with claims for Medicaid-reimbursed personal care assistance services.

## **Post-Acute Care News**

### **Home health care agency going through changes**

*KSAL.com; by Todd Pittenger; 8/22/24*

According to Memorial Health System of Abilene, Home Health & Hospice of Dickinson County (HH&H) has covered many miles throughout Dickinson, Morris, and Marion counties for many years. ... While it was never about profit and more about going the extra mile to take care of the people in the community, the small agency can no longer support the supply and demand of what it takes to provide these services. They have taken a loss for several years and can no longer sustain that loss. Home Health & Hospice of Dickinson County is not closing. Their local staff is proud to be the only agency in the community that provides the kind of quality care to neighbors, friends, and family, and will continue to do so. HH&H has been in contact with multiple agencies that can assist patients to locate agencies or individuals who can provide these types of services and they are ready to assist. [List of resources]

### **More than half of Mission's remaining staff neurologists say they are resigning, citing burnout, 'nausea and fury'**

*NC Health News; by Asheville Watchdog; 8/23/24*

Three staff neurologists are leaving Mission Hospital by the end of September, potentially leaving only two to provide critical care to hundreds of patients at the Asheville flagship hospital and across western North Carolina, including many who have suffered strokes. ... *Asheville Watchdog* interviewed departing physicians, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of concern for their

careers or potential retribution. Their departures — triggered by what they describe as an ever-increasing patient load, Mission's years-long inability to hire more physicians, and pay issues — intensify an exodus from the HCA Healthcare-owned hospital and a program that has been recognized nationally.

*Editor's Note: Pair this with the article we posted on 8/20/24, [HCA pushed out providers, downgraded care after acquiring Mission Health: report.](#)*



## **Capitol Notebook: New study spotlights Iowa health care landscape**

*The Gazette; by The Gazette-Lee Des Moines Bureau; 8/22/24*

More Iowa health care facilities have closed than opened since 2008, and more Iowa hospitals are operating at a loss as workforce shortages and costs rise. ...

Key findings of the report include:

- More than one third of all Iowa hospitals, and 60 percent of rural hospitals, operated at a loss in 2022.
- Over the last 15 years, 250 more health care facilities in Iowa have closed than have opened, with mental health centers leading all provider types in net closings, along with elderly care, home health, hospice and rehabilitation centers.

## **Technology / Innovations News**

### **Review – ‘Eternal You’: a documentary about the digital afterlife industry**

*ehospice; 8/19/24*

In her second blog for Part of Life, Khadiza Laskor, a third-year PhD Student at the University of Bristol's Cyber Security Centre for Doctoral Training Programme, reviews 'Eternal You': a documentary about the Digital Afterlife Industry. It features companies serving the Digital Afterlife Industry which has grown with the emergence of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI): texts, audio and images generated by algorithms.

## How to integrate AI into your business: A 2024 guide

*eWeek; by Sam Rinko; 8/22/24*

If you're an IT professional or executive, the question of how to integrate AI into your business has probably been top of mind since the recent generative AI boom. You know you should be using AI tools to improve your operational efficiency, but you might worry you lack the policies, data quality and implementation strategy to do so effectively. ... Key Takeaways:

- Integrating AI into your business involves assessing business needs, developing a strategy, preparing your data, choosing the right vendor, implementing the AI, and monitoring its performance.
- Three AI tools every business can easily implement for increased efficiency include Grammarly, HubSpot CRM, and Fireflies.ai.
- AI business integrations promise benefits for every industry, including retail, healthcare, manufacturing, and financial services.



## Education

### Sophisticated caregiver training remains an underutilized retention, ROI tool

*Home Health Care News; by Audrie Martin; 8/22/24*

... [Only] 43.8% of home-based care staff and 55% of home health and hospice staff feel prepared to care for new clients, according to the 2024 Activated Insights Benchmarking Report. As a possible result, the annual care staff turnover rate has climbed 14% in the last two years to almost 80%. Organizations demonstrating a commitment to continuing education improve employee satisfaction by allowing caregivers to hone their skills and grow in their careers. Investing in employees' long-term success will impart a sense of purpose and possibility within a role known for turnover and burnout. "The average home-based care provider offers five hours of orientation and eight hours of ongoing training," the report read. "Those who offer at least eight orientation hours and 12 hours of ongoing training see an increase of \$1,103,291 in revenue. However,



while establishing a clear path is one of the top strategies to retaining long-term employees, only 39% of providers have one.”

## Non-print News

### What is Death?

*GeriPal* podcast; by Eric Widera, Alex Smith, Winston Chiong, Sean Aas; 8/22/24

We’ve talked about Brain Death before ... and in many ways today’s podcast is a follow up to that episode. Why does this issue keep coming up? Why is it unresolved? Today we put these questions to Winston Chiong, a neurologist and bioethicist, and Sean Aas, a philosopher and bioethicist.

## Today's Encouragement

**Monday is for people with a mission. ~ Cristina Imre**



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