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**HOSPICE &
PALLIATIVE CARE
TODAY**

September 6th, 2024

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Headlines

NAHC and NHPCO unveil name, logo, and website for newly formed organization

Press Release; 9/5/24

The National Alliance for Care at Home will combine the strengths of the two largest national organizations representing healthcare providers delivering care

primarily in homes. The Alliance will provide unparalleled resources and representation to support the care-at-home community.

Top news stories of the month, August 2024

Teleios Collaborative Network (TCN); podcast by Chris Comeaux and Mark Cohen; 9/4/24

In this week's podcast, Mark Cohen joins me once more for the Top News Stories for the prior month from Hospice & Palliative Care Today. ... The conversation between Chris Comeaux and Mark Cohen this month covers various topics, including the side effects of medication, the idea of a Hospice Legacy Project, and funding opportunities. They also discuss the impact of John Oliver's HBO episode on Hospice fraud, abuse, and neglect. The conversation highlights the need for reputable providers from both the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to join forces to protect the integrity of Hospice Care.

Hospice Provider News

"What I wish I knew about hospice": A Cleveland Clinic palliative care physician's insights

The Healthy; by Dr. Patricia Varacall, DO; 9/3/24

An expert MD shares essential insights on hospice: "At its core, is about human connection." ... Laura Hoeksema, MD, MPH, FAAHPM, medical director of Cleveland Clinic Hospice and staff physician in the department of palliative and supportive care, explains the importance of hospice: ... "When time becomes limited, patients need to be able to spend time in a way that's meaningful to them." ... Dr. Hoeksema emphasizes that choosing hospice care is exactly that—a choice. ... "When a patient has a serious illness, it's common for their illness to become the primary focus," reflects Dr. Hoeksema. The constant anticipation of how the disease might progress can create overwhelming anxiety. With hospice, the illness recedes into the background, allowing the emphasis to be on caring for the person as a whole. ... It's also essential to know that choosing hospice care isn't a final decision. Patients have the flexibility to leave hospice if their circumstances change. ... "The most profound healing I've witnessed as a physician has been in patients receiving hospice care," Dr. Hoeksema adds. She recalls seeing families reconcile after years of tension and others coming together after long periods of distance. The joy on a patient's face when

surrounded by loved ones, laughing and reminiscing, is what it's all about. "Hospice care, at its core, is about human connection."



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Bay Bluffs opens hospice wing as end-of-life care models change

Interlochen Public Radio; by Michael Livingston; 9/4/24

Three new beds for hospice care opened in Harbor Springs today marking the end of a year-long pivot for an end-of-life care organization in the region. Last year, McLaren Health System closed hospice facilities in Petoskey and Cheboygan. Combined, the facilities provided more than a dozen beds for hospice in the region. At the time, McLaren called the decision to close "difficult" but necessary due to staffing constraints and said it would move to prioritizing outpatient hospice care - when a nurse visits patients in the home rather than a facility. But a group of advocates in Petoskey said residential hospice is needed in the region - especially for people with serious terminal illnesses. David McBride leads the newly renamed group, Friends of Hospice of Little Traverse Bay. It used to be called the Friends of Hiland Cottage for the facility in Petoskey. ... That's what led to a partnership with skilled nursing facility Bay Bluffs in Harbor Springs. It's the Emmet County Medical Care Facility and owned by the county health department. Bay Bluffs is not a licensed hospice provider but it is able to outsource hospice from other companies while providing rooms for families to gather with their loved ones and trained nursing. This newer model of end-of-life care is a growing trend and has been tried in other places such as Arbor Hospice in Ann Arbor which closed its residential facility in 2022.

Grief redoubled by a death certificate delayed: A seven-week odyssey in search of a vital record

The Provincetown Independent; by Aden Choate; 9/4/24

Richard Pask, 72, came to the select board on Aug. 27 distraught. His wife, Carol Harris, 69, who had ALS, had died at home in hospice care on July 18, he said, and the town had still not issued a death certificate. Without the certificate, Pask could not access his late wife's pension payments, manage their mutual assets, update annuity contracts, or cancel service accounts in her name. The Social Security Administration, which has continued to issue payments to Harris — a death certificate is required to stop them — had launched an investigation into possible fraud, ...

Editor's note: Root causes from this complex case study relate to the family having used a "green burial" which is becoming more common, where permitted. This case study represents a gap in collaboration between typical systems. Hospice personnel who have any 'touch-points' with the death certificate process must know and adhere to federal, state, and local policies and procedures, especially when variables occur (such as green burials).

Palliative Care Provider News

ASCO palliative care expert panel provides recommendations to integrate health equity into guideline development

OncoLive, Cranbury, NJ; by Kyle Doherty; 9/4/24

The ASCO Palliative Care Expert Panel [American Society of Clinical Oncology], in collaboration with ASCO's Health Equity and Outcomes Committee, has published recommendations for integrating health equity measures into future guideline updates. Recommendations advocated for partnerships with increased representation from historically marginalized groups and patient and community-based advocates; a reinforcement of implicit bias training for Expert Panel members as a component of guideline preparation; stratified recommendations and/or guidelines for additional groups; and the review and appraisal of future recommendations by the Expert Panel, patient as well as community advocates, and ASCO reviewers for the inclusion of proper health equity measures before publication.



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Clinical News

Allowing patients to die: Louise Aronson and Bill Andereck

GeriPal podcast; by Alex Smith, Eric Widera, Louise Aronson, Bill Andereck; 9/5/24

In today's podcast we set the stage with the story of Dax Cowart, who in 1973 was a 25 year old man horribly burned in a freak accident. Two thirds of his body was burned, most of his fingers were amputated, and he lost vision in both eyes. During his 14 month recovery Dax repeatedly demanded that he be allowed to die. The requests were ignored. After, he said he was both glad to be alive, and that the doctors should have respected his wish to be allowed to die. But that was 1973, you might say. We don't have such issues today, do we? Louise Aronson's recent perspective about her mother in the NEJM, titled, "[Beyond Code Status](#)" suggests no, we still struggle with this issue. And Bill Andereck is still haunted by the decision he made to have the police break down the door to rescue his patient who attempted suicide in the 1980s, as detailed in [this essay in the Cambridge Quarterly of HealthCare Ethics](#).

American Heart Association affirms importance of palliative care in treating cardiac conditions

Hospice News; by Jim Parker; 9/4/24

Multidisciplinary palliative care offers clear benefits to patients with cardiovascular disease, particularly when it comes to medication management and goals-of-care conversations. Palliative care with effective medication management, shared decision making and symptom management can help improve quality of life for heart disease patients, according to a scientific statement from the American Heart Association (AHA) — "Palliative Pharmacotherapy for Cardiovascular Disease." The statement offers guidance for health care providers to integrate palliative methods as part of holistic

medication management at all stages of a patient's illness, the AHA indicated. This underscores the importance of collaboration between palliative care professionals and other clinical specialties, according to Dr. Andrew Esch, director of palliative care program development at the Center to Advance Palliative Care (CAPC).

Regulatory News

Humana to depart 13 Medicare Advantage markets

Modern Healthcare; by Lauren Berryman; 9/4/24

Humana previewed its Medicare Advantage strategy for the coming plan year, including a decision to quit 13 counties where performance has been unsatisfactory, at the Wells Fargo Healthcare Conference on Wednesday. The Medicare Advantage heavyweight, which had 6.2 million members in those plans as of the second quarter, expects to lose a few hundred thousand enrollees in 2025 as it prioritizes profitable markets, Chief Financial Officer Susan Diamond told investors at the event in Everett, Massachusetts. In addition to leaving those 13 counties, Humana will offer fewer plans in some other areas, Diamond said. About 560,000 members will have to choose new policies for 2025, most of whom will have other Humana plans available to them, she said. ... Diamond did not specify what markets will be affected, but Humana will continue selling Medicare Advantage plans in every state. The company is committed to a presence in certain favorable regions, including south Florida, she said.



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22 health systems dropping Medicare Advantage plans | 2024

Becker's Hospital CFO Report; by Jakob Emerson; 9/4/24

Medicare Advantage provides health coverage to more than half of the nation's older adults, but some hospitals and health systems are opting to end their contracts with MA plans over administrative challenges. Among the most commonly cited reasons are excessive prior authorization denial rates and slow

payments from insurers. [See article for list of 22 health systems dropping Medicare Advantage plans - including KS, ME, SD, NE, NV, MI, MN, OH, NY, IN, OK, TX, PA, DE, NC, OR, MO, KY, and CA.]

Medicare Advantage vendors brace for supplemental benefits cuts

Modern Healthcare; by Lauren Berryman; 9/4/24

Companies that have profited from the largesse of Medicare Advantage insurers seeking to lure customers with generous perks are looking ahead to a tough 2025. Humana and CVS Health subsidiary Aetna are among those signaling that curtailing supplemental benefits such as transportation, fitness memberships, in-home support services, and vision, dental and hearing coverage will be a key part of their strategies to restore margins in a business troubled by high costs and a more restrictive regulatory environment.

Mergers & Acquisition News

Healthcare private equity transactions under scrutiny: Midyear review

Healthcare Business Today; by Editorial Team; 9/4/24

Highlights

- Holland & Knight predicted last year that the “the current enforcement environment will continue into 2024 and will focus heavily on the healthcare industry, along with private equity transactions or ‘roll-ups.’”
- At the macro level, the first half of 2024 saw two U.S. senators propose bills attempting to regulate private equity’s involvement in the healthcare industry while the U.S. Federal Trade Commission aggressively targeted private equity for its role in healthcare. There was also an influx of new state legislation, including efforts to directly restrict private equity investment, but many efforts failed to pass this legislative term.
- This Holland & Knight alert provides a midyear review of the ongoing federal and state scrutiny focused on private equity investments in the healthcare industry and what investors and platform companies can expect for the rest of the year.

Publisher's note: This article includes state-specific information on IN, CA, PA, CT, MA, MN, OR, and WA.

Ensign Group expands with new Colorado and Kansas acquisitions

Investing.com, San Juan Capistrano, CA; by AI and reviewed by an editor; 9/3/24

The Ensign Group, Inc. ... has expanded its portfolio with the acquisition of seven skilled nursing facilities in Colorado and one in Kansas, effective September 1, 2024. These facilities, which are now subject to long-term, triple net leases, bring Ensign's total operations to 323 healthcare facilities across fourteen states. The Colorado acquisitions include Desert Willow Health and Rehabilitation Center in Pueblo, Junction Creek Health and Rehabilitation Center in Durango, Pelican Pointe Health and Rehabilitation Center in Windsor, Riverbend Health and Rehabilitation Center in Loveland, Broadview Health and Rehabilitation Center and Westlake Lodge Health and Rehabilitation Center both located in Greeley, and Linden Place Health and Rehabilitation Center in Longmont. In addition, Ensign has acquired Prairie Ridge Health and Rehabilitation in Overland Park, Kansas. These latest acquisitions reflect the company's ongoing strategy to grow its presence in the healthcare sector by acquiring both well-performing and underperforming facilities.

Post-Acute Care News

Ohio hospital closes amid financial challenges

Becker's Hospital CFO Report; by Madeline Ashley; 9/4/24

Hicksville, Ohio-based Community Memorial Hospital permanently closed its doors Aug. 31 after temporarily shutting down in May due to financial challenges, Bill Cherry, former CEO of Community Memorial Hospital, confirmed with Becker's. "The decision to close Community Memorial Hospital follows thorough efforts to find a viable path to continue operations," Mr. Cherry said in a Sept. 4 statement shared with Becker's. "Unfortunately, despite all our efforts made, CMH has not been able to identify a sustainable solution. We understand the profound impact this closure will have on the community and we extend our deepest gratitude to the residents of Northwest Ohio and Northeast Indiana for their unwavering support and trust over the years."

Henry Ford Health to take over 8 Ascension hospitals

Modern Healthcare; by Dustin Walsh; 9/4/24

A joint venture between Henry Ford Health and Ascension Michigan will launch on Oct. 1, a spokesperson for Henry Ford Health confirmed to Crain's. Under the no-cash deal, eight Ascension and Genesys hospitals and an addiction treatment center will be rebranded under Henry Ford Health.



Technology / Innovations News

Urgency to adopt AI intensifies for health IT leaders

Becker's Health IT; by Naomi Diaz; 9/4/24

A Sept. 4 survey from healthcare data platform Arcadia revealed that 96% of healthcare technology leaders view the effective use of AI as crucial for gaining a competitive edge. ... The findings show that while 33% of these decision-makers see AI as essential today, that number rises sharply to 73% who believe it will be indispensable within the next five years. Despite their confidence in AI adoption, 96% of health tech leaders report feeling an increasing urgency to act, driven by pressure from data and analytics teams (82%), IT and tech departments (78%) and executive leadership (73%). However, the survey also highlights a significant challenge: 40% of leaders cite a talent shortage as a major barrier to AI implementation. This has led CIOs to place greater emphasis on skills such as data-driven decision-making (71%), data analysis, machine learning and systems integration (66%), as well as the need for roles focused on training and support for healthcare staff (59%).

General News

'His Three Daughters': A sister act that's among the year's best movies

The Washington Post - Arts & Entertainment; by Ty Burr; 9/5/24

Carrie Coon, Elizabeth Olsen and Natasha Lyonne give career-peak performances in Azazel Jacobs's relatable family drama. ... "His Three Daughters" is in all its simplicity and complexity the story of how these women get along over the course of their dad's final week. Spoiler alert: They don't. If that sounds like a downer, the movie's kept from terminal morbidity by writer-director Jacobs's uncanny ear for dialogue and by the empathy of the three central performances. There's humor here, gallows and otherwise. But there's also an overflowing heartful of feeling, approached from three different angles by three different people who all happen to love the same parent. Other people come and go: a hospice worker (Rudy Galvan) whose smooth bromides eventually grate on the sisters' nerves and ours; a night nurse (Jasmine Bracey) with patience and kindness and a full, unseen life outside the apartment; ... In its final moments, the movie takes a risk — a huge gamble, really — that for my money pays off on any number of levels, and in doing so finally confirms its writer-director's talent. ... Available Sept. 20 on Netflix. [Netflix trailer and reminder available now.]

Netsmart announces acquisition of HealthPivots to support value-based care transition for healthcare providers

Press release; by Natalie Caruso; 9/4/24

Netsmart announced it has acquired HealthPivots, an Oregon-based market intelligence company for the post-acute care continuum. The combination of the Netsmart CareFabric® with the HealthPivots DataLab will lead to consolidated, robust data and advanced analytics, providing an industry-leading platform that will help enhance post-acute care providers transition to value-based care.



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Other News

Executive Personnel Changes - 9/6/24

- [Acara Healthcare](#), serving communities across Central and South Texas, appointed Kerri Pendly as its new Chief Operating Officer, providing Personal Home Care, Skilled Home Health, Hospice, In-home Pediatric Care, and Community Living Assistance and Support Services (CLASS)
- [Visiting Nurse Association and Hospice of the Wabash Valley, Terre Haute, IN](#), announced that Kim Streeter will be its new executive director

Today's Encouragement

Begin, be bold and venture to be wise. ~ Horace

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