

IN THE NEWS

News for LTC Professionals
in 100 Words-or-Less

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They said it

"Together, these findings highlight that emotional strain is only part of what nurses are navigating; many also face barriers to accessing the support intended to help them cope" from a Joyce University study examining nurses' perception of safety on the job

"It will take a technically savvy person to complete this audit" Jennifer Napier, practice director with Engage Consulting commenting on CMS' new data validation program for SNFs

"When families entrust a nursing home with the care of their parents or grandparents, they should never have to fear that their loved ones are being neglected or harmed. Failing at that basic duty is unacceptable" Ohio AG Dave Yost who is attempting to close a SNF for providing bad care

US Nursing Home Capacity Takes a Steep Nosedive

In a University of Rochester study, US nursing homes have lost 5% of their operating capacity since 2020, that looks beyond bed counts to understand why providers have had to limit admissions.

While the number of skilled nursing beds declined 2.5% between 2019 and 2024 due to closures, license conversions and room privatization, researchers found that the pandemic, staffing shortages and other operating factors doubled the impact on capacity.

While the 5% represents a national reduction, rural pockets have been hit especially hard, and operating capacity fell 15.1% or more in about 20% of the counties in America.

JAMA Internal Medicine, 01/12/2026

Providers Get First Data Validation Requests

CMS has begun notifying providers of their selection as the initial data validation SNFs.

It requires affected providers (up to 1500 annually) to name two points of contact within five business days and fully submit all information by Feb. 26.

The notification also will provide detailed instructions on which sections of the medical record to submit.

Providers must submit information on up to 10 residents. Those who don't submit all request information promptly could be subject to a 2% financial penalty

CMS says the new audit-like review will evaluate the accuracy of quality measures derived from the MDS.

McKnight's, 01/12/2026

Bill Introduced to Stop Medicaid Estate Seizures

Legislation to end the federal requirement that forces states to pursue repayment from the families and estates of deceased Medicaid recipients who received long-term care has been reintroduced in the U.S. House.

state Medicaid programs are currently required to recover the costs of long-term care services after a beneficiary's death, which often results in placing liens on or forcing the sale of a family home.

Even when states recognize the harm caused by this practice, federal law leaves them little choice.

The *Stop Unfair Medicaid Recoveries Act* is endorsed by several elderly and consumer Advocate organizations.

Rep. Jan Schakowsky news release, 10/06/2026

Nearly Half of Nurses Feel Unsafe at Work

Almost half (49.5%) of nurses have felt unsafe due to verbal or physical aggression from a patient or a patient's family member in the past year.

researchers at Joyce University in Utah, polled 1,000 registered nurses in the U.S. in 2025.

About 74% of nurses have felt emotionally exhausted from work multiple times a week in the past month; 28% of Gen Z nurses have felt burnt; 53% have seriously considered leaving the nursing profession; while 49% been worried, once a week or more, that they might make a medication error or other mistake due to fatigue or being overwhelmed.

McKnight's Clinical Daily News, 01/09/2026

Billion Dollar Bid Genesis Has a New Owner

After five rounds of bidding involving three bidders, an entity called 101 West Street won the auction for Genesis Healthcare for \$1.015 billion.

While the notice itself did not disclose the make up or leadership of 101 West Street, an auction transcript showed that attorneys for West Street said they represented Shawn Zhou, who is chief financial officer of Los Angeles-based NewGen Health.

The administrative services company runs skilled nursing, assisted living and senior living properties on the West Coast.

McKnight's, 01/14/2026

CMS to Remove Complaints From Nursing Home Compare

CMS plans to remove reporting about unsubstantiated complaints from Nursing Home Care Compare next month.

The agency informed skilled nursing providers about the coming change in a special alert memo that also contained details on ongoing issues with Care Compare data discrepancies.

Officials linked both problems to the transition to a new cloud-based system that feeds survey and certification data to the consumer-oriented nursing home webpage.

A new policy also saw the publicly reported complaints increase. That change allowed duplicate allegations, unverified claims and self-reported incidents to filter through to Care Compare,

CMS.gov, 01/11/2026

IN THE TRENCHES – COVID-19 & Other Outbreaks in the U.S. and the World

EUROPE: COVID continues to cause hospitalizations and deaths throughout Europe, particularly among adults older than 60 and persons with chronic conditions. Vaccination remains effective at reducing the risk of severe disease and hospitalization, notes the WHO, yet uptake among high-risk groups remains low in some regions (*WHO*).

MISSISSIPPI: Diligent public health efforts nearly eliminated syphilis in the state 20 years ago. But as STI clinics have closed and the public health workers have been laid off, syphilis has come raging back, with “catastrophic” consequences for babies of affected mothers. Maternal syphilis rates in the United States tripled from 2016 to 2022 reaching 280.4 per 100,000 births in 2022, according to the CDC. Cases are rising even more quickly in Mississippi, where the rate of maternal syphilis infections grew more than 1,000% from 2013 to 2023 (*JAMA Network Open*).

CANADA: Officials and public health experts are warning that US health and science institutions can no longer be depended upon for accurate information, particularly about vaccinations, amid fears that misinformation from the Trump administration could further erode Canadians’ confidence in healthcare (*The Guardian*).

AMERICA: As of December 30, there have been 2,065 confirmed measles cases in the US in 2025, according to data published by the CDC. The last time there were more than 2,000 cases reported in one year was in 1992, just a couple years after health leaders updated recommendations to say that children should get two doses of the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine instead of just one (*CNN*).

SOUTH CAROLINA: Three days after Christmas, Deborah Greenhouse, MD, of Columbia, South Carolina, voiced her frustration on social media about the measles outbreak in her state: “Things that I can’t believe I am doing as a

pediatrician on a Sunday morning in December 2025: Triageing patients with fever and rash in my office parking lot to avoid bringing a child inside who might expose everyone in our waiting rooms to measles. And yet here we are ...” (*MedPage Today*).

AMERICA: As flu season hits the country with over 81,000 hospitalizations and 3,100 deaths reported so far, a large number of Americans are still hesitant to get vaccinated against it, but why? As of December 2025, only 34% of adults across the country had gotten flu shots. Among those who decided against vaccination, 16% worried about its safety, and 13% rejected it because they “never get sick” (*Newsweek*).

WEST COAST: Health officials in California, Oregon, Washington and Hawaii continue to endorse the same childhood vaccines that have long been part of U.S. public health policy — despite a move by the CDC to significantly reduce the number of vaccinations routinely recommended for children. The CDC has now announced it is downgrading its recommendation that all children get vaccinated against the flu, hepatitis A, meningococcal disease, rotavirus and RSV (*San Francisco Chronicle*).

AMERICA: Adults 65 years and older shouldered a disproportionate share COVID-related illnesses. Although they make up less than 20% of the US population, older adults accounted for nearly half (47.5%) of all COVID illnesses, roughly two-thirds (67.5%) of hospitalizations, and over 80% of deaths (81.3%) during the study period. On average, approximately 1 in 100 adults aged 65 years and older were hospitalized for COVID each year (*CIDRAP*).

ATLANTA: Even after the COVID-19 public health emergency ended in May 2023, the virus continued to cause millions of illnesses and more than 100,000 deaths annually with the majority of severe outcomes and deaths concentrated among older adults. A CDC research team estimated that COVID caused roughly 43.6 million illnesses, 10 million outpatient visits, 1.1 million hospitalizations, and 101,300 deaths

during the 2022–23 respiratory illness season (*JAMA Internal Medicine*).

CHINA: Scientists from Lanzhou University in Gansu, China, examined 64 studies conducted in 20 countries with a total of 2.4 million participants. They divided long COVID-19 patients according to subtypes created based on co-occurrence of symptoms, affected groups, severity of symptoms, and other features. Fatigue stood out as the most common. Other groups were loss of smell and taste, anxiety and depression, and then musculoskeletal pain. (*eClinicalMedicine*).

UTAH: Just outside Salt Lake City sits an old, two-story, brick hotel. It’s been given new life as a homeless shelter for seniors. The Medically Vulnerable People shelter — or MVP shelter, as it’s known — is for people 62 and older or for younger adults with chronic health issues. Residents share rooms designed to be accessible to those with mobility issues. There are also private bathrooms, which are a big deal for seniors struggling with incontinence. (*KFF Health News*).

WASHINGTON, D.C: The FDA told influenza vaccine makers they should add a warning about an increased febrile seizure risk in babies and preschoolers the day after flu vaccination. The new language in the label would state, “In two separate postmarketing observational studies, an increased risk of febrile seizures was observed during the first day following vaccination with standard dose trivalent (2024-2025) and quadrivalent (2023-2024) influenza vaccines in children 6 months through 4 years of age” (*MedPage Today*).

COVID-19, 01/15/2026

World Total Cases
779,051,482

World Total Deaths
7,108,060

U.S. Total Deaths
1,232,488

World Health Organization

Inconsistency in Managing Outbreaks in Nursing Homes

Researchers in the Netherlands monitored the progression and management of 24 flu and COVID outbreaks in nursing homes, selecting seven for extensive monitoring.

They found protocols were often too general and insufficiently tailored to the individual outbreaks forcing staff to adapt based on judgement rather than following established protocols.

Room isolation varied widely. Some emphasized the need to “tailor” isolation to individual circumstances, even when that meant deviating from protocol. On the 42 units affected by the closely studied outbreak, 60% used isolation but just one-third placed visitor limitations.

Approximately 52% of units canceled all activities,

JAMA, 01/10/2026

Ohio AG Moves to Close Small SNF

Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost is seeking a court order to shut down House of Loreto, a Canton nursing home, after Department of Health surveyors determined that widespread care failures are putting residents in “real and present danger.”

Six residents have already suffered actual harm.

Citations include: blood thinners not monitored, medication undocumented, narcotics inadequately controlled, dementia residents eloping, poor wound care that caused infections that failed to heal, no infection preventionist on staff and unmonitored kidney problems resulting in hospitalizations.

The AG said 12 of the home’s 29 residents are at serious risk.

Ohio AG news release, 01/13/2026

Victims of Pennsylvania Explosion File Lawsuit

A lawsuit seeks damages on behalf of two victims injured in a December explosion at a Bristol, Pennsylvania nursing home.

The plaintiffs were both residents at Bristol H&R Center where three people were killed and approximately 20 people injured in the incident.

The group is suing, among others, facility operator Saber Healthcare Group, as well as natural gas supplier PECO.

The suit claims Bristol supplied residents with cigarettes and lighters, during smoke times, even after the smell of gas had been reported and that the gas company and the facility failed to shut off the gas.

WHYY Radio (public radio), 01/09/2026

Court Blocks NY’s Attempt To End Capital Funding

Nearly 100 nursing homes can continue receiving state funding to help fund capital improvements at their aging facilities — at least for now.

A federal judge ruled in favor of the nursing homes, issuing a temporary injunction that prohibits New York from eliminating “residual” reimbursement that covers half of most physical plant investments.

The state laid the groundwork in 2020 to revoke that funding from for-profit facilities 40 years or older. Ninety-two providers sued after their 2024 Medicaid rate notices left it out. The ruling also blocks the state from trying to recoup about \$208 million in residual payments.

McKnight’s, 01/05/2026

NJ County SNF Going on Auction Block

Atlantic County wants to sell its nursing home, one of the last publicly owned facilities of its kind in New Jersey.

Mounting operation costs since the pandemic have increasingly become unmanageable, for the 180-bed Meadowview Nursing Home in Northfield.

County commissioners unanimously approved four resolutions last month to begin the sale process with an asking price of at least \$23.5 million.

In the resolution, Atlantic County specified that the buyer guarantee employment of the facility’s staff for at least 24 months and for about 30 beds to remain open for military veterans.

nj.com, 01/07/2026

ONE COLUMN **Risks of Flaws Persist in AI-Driven Prior Authorizations**

A team of Stanford University researchers specializing in health law, AI, ethics and medicine identified “risks of supercharged flaws” in harnessing AI for prior authorization

Prior authorization is a longstanding sore spot for both payers and providers. The authors acknowledged the potential for AI to alleviate this.

The “AI arms race” driving further payer-provider tension is no secret: Insurers blame providers for clinical documentation tools that could prompt over-coding while providers blame insurers for tools that could lead to unfair denials.

Providers can then hit back with AI-drafted appeals - the authors listed a handful of vendor tools that can do just that.

Some states are attempting to mitigate AI use, as well, even as insurers defend their commitments to keeping “humans in the loop.”

“More relevant is the time that humans spend reviewing files that are ultimately denied — information that insurers have not shared,” they said.

Human reviewers may also have an anchoring bias as a result of scanning an AI-generated case summary first or face organizational pressures to side with the tool’s recommendations. Automation bias — or excessive trust of computerized decision support — could be another issue. The team also said users lacking clinical expertise could prompt AI hallucinations to become even more exacerbated.

The researchers said, “No studies have compared rates of denials or wrongful denials (those reversed on appeal) in reviews with and without AI, making it difficult to disentangle potential causes of rising denial rates or assess the impacts of AI use.”

The report called for stronger governance, monitoring for underperformance, staff training and “meaningful” human engagement in reviews.

Becker’s Payor, 01/12/2026

Attorney: PE, REITs Drive Decline in SNF Quality

Private equity and real estate investment trusts are the main financing vehicles in long-term care, and their presence, ultimately, has hurt quality of care.

Elder abuse litigation attorney Ed Dudensing at an end-of-year webinar said private equity and REIT ownership of nursing homes has grown exponentially to reach 13% in 2025.

Dudensing said PE is associated with a 10% increase in the short-term mortality rates of Medicare patients, increased ED visits, increased hospitalizations and increased government spending.

Further, he noted, PE-owned LTC facilities had a 12% decline in registered nursing hours and a 14% increase in deficiency scores after acquisition.

Senior Living, 12/16/2025

Assisted Living Tops Nursing Homes In Telehealth Use

Differences exist in telehealth use depending on where an older adult lives, with use being more prevalent in assisted living communities than in nursing homes.

Nevertheless, use is highest in the areas of long-term care studied among older adults who live in the greater community.

Specifically, 34% of assisted living residents in a recent study compared with 39% of community-dwelling older adults and 20% of nursing home residents.

Having more than one known diagnosis not related to dementia was linked to higher odds of telehealth use among all older adults.

JAMDA, 01/08/2026

Fake Doc Orders Get CEO Lengthy Stay in Slammer

Gary Cox, 79, CEO of Power Mobility Doctor Rx (PMDRx), a healthcare software company, has been sentenced to 15 years in prison for conspiring to defraud Medicare and other federal health care benefit programs of more than \$1 billion.

Cox connected pharmacies, DME suppliers and marketers with telemedicine companies that would accept illegal kickbacks and bribes in exchange for signed doctors' orders transmitted using the DMERx platform.

Cox received payments for coordinating illegal kickbacks and referring the completed but fraudulent doctors' orders to DME suppliers, pharmacies and telemarketers that paid kickbacks and bribes for the orders.

DOJ news release, 12/22/2025

Another State to Regulate SNF Workplace Violence

OSHA has guidance on workplace violence prevention, but the rules are not mandatory.

Now New York Gov. Kathy Hochul (D) has signed into law a bill which singles out nursing homes and hospitals for new rules requiring assessment, prevention and reporting of safety threats or incidents.

At least 11 other states either have similar new requirements or are developing them.

McKnight's, 12/23/2025

Ohio Health Care Assn. Names New CEO

The Ohio Health Care Association has named Scott Wiley its incoming CEO and said in an announcement that he is set to start in January.

Wiley follows in the footsteps of Peter Van Runkle, who announced in July that he was stepping down as executive director after 30 years with OHCA. Van Runkle has moved to a consulting role.

OHCA called Wiley "a seasoned leader" with more than two decades of "strategic, forward-looking leadership and coalition-building experience across professional, membership and advocacy organizations."

The organization was led on an interim basis by Assistant Executive Director Diane Dietz.

McKnight's, 12/8/30/82025

Briefly in the News

Using a new definition that includes waist-based measurements, researchers found that more than 75% of adults may meet criteria for obesity. The team looked at data representing 237.7 million adults between 2017 and 2023, applying the Lancet Commission's proposed obesity criteria along with BMI. They found an estimated 75.2% of U.S. adults met criteria for obesity using BMI and additional body measurements compared to 40% when BMI alone was reviewed **(ABC News)**.

Don't drink the water – on an airliner. Don't drink the coffee either. Unhealthy water violates the federal government's Aircraft Drinking Water Rule (ADWR), which was implemented in 2011 and requires airlines to provide passengers and flight crew with safe drinking water. In a three-year survey Delta Air Lines and Frontier Airlines win the top spots with the safest water in the sky. Researchers said the safest water comes in sealed bottles **(Center for Food as Medicine and Longevity)**.

Tatiana Schlossberg, an environmental journalist and author who was a granddaughter of President John F. Kennedy, has died after revealing she had been diagnosed with cancer. She was 35. Schlossberg wrote in *The New Yorker* on Nov. 22 that she had acute myeloid leukemia **(NBC News)**.

The purge is continuing at the National Institutes for Health. Walter Koroshetz, MD, long-time director of the NIH's National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke is stepping down after his reappointment request was unexpectedly denied. He was given a 4-week extension "for an orderly transition." The vacancy means the NIH is without permanent leadership in 14 of its 27 institutes **(Reuters)**.

New Hampshire state Sen. David Rochefort said he and the state's legislative staff are in the process of drafting a late bill aimed at addressing systemic abuse and neglect issues in New Hampshire intellectual and developmental disability care system **(New Hampshire Bulletin)**.