

IN THE NEWS

News for LTC Professionals
in 100 Words-or-Less

Edited by Drew Vogel

drewvogel5255@msn.com

Vol 10

03/15/2026

They said it

“Public health has been turned on its head. We have an anti-vaccine activist and science denialist as the head of U.S. Health and Human Services” Paul Offit, former member of FDA’s vaccine advisory committee

“It is not a mild infection. It is not a mild virus. It is severe illness” state epidemiologist, Dr. Leisha Nolen referring to the growing measles outbreak in Utah

“When someone gets hurt or their loved one gets hurt, facilities shouldn’t be able to say, ‘Well, you’re out of luck. I don’t have any insurance” Missouri State Sen. Adam Schnelting who sponsored a bill requiring LTC facilities to carry \$1 million in abuse liability insurance

Will They Go or Will they Stay? – PDPM’s Add-ons

Changes to a key component of PDPM remain in limbo two years after they were first proposed, but federal regulators are still poised to refine the system to accommodate for unexpected spending and evolving patient needs.

Revisions to PDPM’s non-therapy ancillary list, which pays providers more for certain conditions, were first promoted as part of the proposed 2025 skilled nursing payment rule.

Those changes would have added some, deleted some and combined some – incentivizing providers to care for patients with specific behavioral health diagnoses.

However, some experts say it’s doubtful that the codes will be adopted this rule-making cycle.

DOJ news release, 03/09/2026

CMS ‘Reviewing’ Policy On Antipsychs in Nursing Homes

Federal regulators are reportedly reexamining a policy discouraging use of antipsychotic medications in nursing homes unless patients have one of three specific conditions.

Citing an email from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services *The Washington Post* reported that the agency is undertaking a review “with the goal of supporting clinically indicated use while continuing to discourage inappropriate prescribing.”

The newspaper also reported that Congress instructed the agency to better distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate prescribing in skilled nursing policies as part of budget negotiations last month.

McKnight’s, 03/06/2026

Legionella is Serious In Your Building

A study links *Legionella* pneumonia to high 30-day death rates, especially in patients who are older or have underlying cirrhosis, a weakened immune system, or lymphopenia.

Investigators at Mayo Clinic in Phoenix and Rochester, Minnesota, mined the electronic health records of 344 adults diagnosed as having *Legionella* pneumonia from January 2019 to September 2025. The median patient age was 66.6 years, and 45.1% had an impaired immune system.

Most patients (94.2%) were hospitalized, 36.1% were admitted to the ICU, 22.7% needed mechanical ventilation, and 1.5% received extracorporeal membrane oxygenation. Thirty- and 90-day death rates were 11.9% and 16.6%, respectively.

Clinical Infectious Diseases, 03/03/2026

Missouri Bill Requires Liability Insurance for SNFs

Missouri lawmakers are considering legislation to increase accountability and transparency around elder abuse and neglect in long-term care facilities.

The legislation would increase penalties and require long-term care facilities to maintain liability insurance policies worth at least \$1 million.

LTC providers are opposed to the liability insurance requirement.

Tim Blattel, legislative chair for the Missouri Assisted Living Association and CEO of Twin Oaks Senior Living in Wentzville, I said his annual insurance premium increased from \$73,000 to \$230,000 in one year because St. Louis has been deemed a “litigious area.”

A Senate committee debated the bill last week.

Missouri Independent, 03/10/2026

Newsom Picks Fight With Trump & Junior on Health

California Gov. Gavin Newsom has teamed up with several other Democratic governors to form the West Coast Health Alliance, whose guidance would “uphold scientific integrity in public health as Trump destroys” the CDC’s credibility.

California also became the first state to join a global outbreak response network coordinated by the World Health Organization. Newsom said joining the WHO-led consortium would enable California to respond faster to communicable disease outbreaks.

Members of the scientific community have praised his effort to build a public health bulwark against the Trump administration’s slashing of funding and scaling back of vaccine recommendations.

Los Angeles Times, 03/09/2026

Death at Canadian ALF Leads To Manslaughter Charge

Thunder Bay Police said that a 58-year-old resident has been charged with manslaughter in connection with the death of Ernest Edgar Barrie, 81, an ALF resident.

Thunder Bay Police received a call about an assault that took place on Feb. 4.

Barrie was taken to the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre on Feb. 5, the day after the alleged incident, and died in hospital on Feb. 10.

TB News Watch, 02/28/2026

IN THE TRENCHES

Vaccines, COVID-19, Flu, Measles & Other Outbreaks Around the Globe

AMERICA: Eleven new pediatric flu deaths were reported this week, according to the latest update on US flu activity. A total of 90 children have died from flu-related complications this season. Approximately 85% of those deaths were in children who were not fully vaccinated against flu. Although confirmed weekly hospitalizations for flu continue to drop, falling from 13,785 admissions to 10,763, the cumulative hospitalization total for the season is the third highest since the 2010-11 season (*CDC*).

THE WORLD: Scientists say they have identified a mutated autoantibody gene as the mechanism behind rare but serious abnormal blood clotting after adenovirus-based COVID-19 vaccination, a discovery that they say will allow vaccine developers to avert the disorder by adjusting the adenovirus protein in the vaccines while still preserving their efficacy (*CIDRAP*).

SOUTH CAROLINA: The measles outbreak in South Carolina reached 979 cases, but its growth seems to be slowing. Only six new cases were reported by the South Carolina Department of Public Health (DPH) in an update today. This is the first time since January the state has reported fewer than 10 new cases in an update (*CIDRAP*).

AMERICA: From a study by the American Cancer Society cervical cancer rates in young women have dropped dramatically in the United States since a vaccine for human papillomavirus (HPV) became available. States with high vaccination rates have seen the biggest drop in cervical cancer, while states with low vaccination rates have had little to no progress). HPV causes 90% of cervical cancers (*CIDRAP*).

THE WORLD: Two studies examined the effects of COVID-19 vaccination in pregnancy, with one estimating that full vaccination and a booster dose reduce the risk of preeclampsia by 15% and 33%, respectively. Preeclampsia is a serious

complication of pregnancy that may include high blood pressure, kidney damage, or other signs of organ damage. The other study finding no elevated risk of miscarriage before 20 weeks' gestation among pregnant or soon-to-be-pregnant recipients of the Pfizer/BioNTech or Moderna vaccines (*eClinicalMedicine*).

BRITISH COLUMBIA: A large population-based study from the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control suggests that COVID-19 infection is associated with an increased risk of type 2 diabetes in unvaccinated and severely ill patients, with elevated risk persisting for up to 3 years after infection. In the study, published in *Diabetes/Metabolism Research and Reviews*, the team analyzed data from more than 2 million adults who underwent COVID testing from January 2020 to January 2024 (*CIDRAP*).

AMERICA: Adults with long COVID face an increased risk of developing depressive and anxiety symptoms up to three years after their initial infection. At three years, 16.9% of adults reported depressive symptoms, compared with 7.5% of those without long COVID. Anxiety was reported by 17.2% of those with long COVID, versus 9.3% of those without. Overall, adults with long COVID had an 86% higher risk of depressive symptoms and a 60% higher risk of anxiety symptoms at three years (*BMC Public Health*).

THE WORLD: People with HIV had a significantly higher risk of developing long COVID across multiple organ systems than people without HIV. University of South Carolina researchers identified 838,520 adults with confirmed COVID-19. Of those, 2,662 (0.3%) had HIV. Overall, those with HIV had a 29% higher risk of developing any long-COVID condition (*Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome*).

THE WORLD: Scientists say they have identified a mutated autoantibody gene as the mechanism behind rare but serious abnormal blood clotting after adenovirus-based COVID-19 vaccination. At the peak of the pandemic a small number of people developed vaccine-induced immune thrombocytopenia and thrombosis (VITT). VITT occurred in roughly one of 200,000 people after receipt of the Oxford-

AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine in Europe and Australia or the Johnson & Johnson (J&J) vaccine in the U.S. (*New England Journal of Medicine*).

NEW YORK: In late January, U.S. Rep. Andrew Garbarino, R-NY, chair of the House Committee on Homeland Security, inquired about the status of more than \$1 billion that the Federal Emergency Management Agency had still not paid to New York health systems for COVID-19 expenses dating back to 2020. Garbarino said he is "still working with" the agency to obtain the documentation he requested in January to investigate the situation. The money still hasn't been disbursed (*NOTUS*).

THE WORLD: Using linked epidemiologic and economic models tailored to 79 low-and-middle-income countries, which represent 91% of the world's tuberculous cases, US and UK researchers projected the household financial consequences of several funding-cut scenarios from 2025 through 2050. Under a scenario in which USAID funding alone is terminated beginning in 2025, TB-affected households would face an estimated \$7.5 billion in additional patient-incurred costs over 25 years (*PLOS Medicine*).

AMERICA: Moderna announced that its mRNA combined seasonal flu and COVID-19 vaccine proved robust and produced a durable immune response in a small, mid-stage trial. There were also no serious safety concerns. The company said a single dose of mRNA-1073 elicited durable immune responses through 6 months against all vaccine-matched influenza and SARS-CoV-2 strains (*Reuters*).

COVID-19, 03/12/2026

World Total Cases
779,145,936

World Total Deaths
7,112,352

U.S. Total Deaths
1,235,885

World Health Organization

COVID-19 Deadlier for Babies Than RSV

Children under two years of age hospitalized for COVID-19 are more likely to die or become seriously ill than babies with RSV.

In the study, 39% of babies with COVID-19 admitted to an ICU needed to be put on a ventilator to breathe, compared with 16% of babies with RSV. Children hospitalized for COVID-19 also stayed in the hospital longer than those with RSV in the study, which included 33 hospitals in 28 states and was conducted from November 2023 to March 2024.

Of the 1406 babies studied, 2.9% with COVID-19 died, compared to 0.4% of those with RSV.

Open Forum Infectious Diseases, 03/05/2026

Employing Social Workers Helps to Reduce Restraints

The staffing of qualified social workers (QSW) was associated with a significant reduction in the use of restraints in nursing homes, particularly in facilities serving residents with cognitive impairment.

The study examined data from 2,491 SNFs from Jan. 1, 2017, to Dec. 31, 2021.

The results showed that employment of QSWs was associated with reduced restraint use, with the proportion of 2021 restraint usage being 0.3 percentage points lower than it was in 2017.

Additionally, restraint use was lower by 0.5 percentage points among facilities with a high prevalence of AD/DR.

JAMA Network Open, February 2026

Buyers Bailing Out Due To State Red Tape

Elemental Management notified the state last month it was terminating its purchase agreement for the Villages of Orleans in Western New York. Once a county-owned nursing home, 120-bed Orleans slid to a one-star rating under its current owner and has been embroiled in a legal battle with the state attorney general over fraud allegations since 2022.

Collapse of that deal after nearly three years was blamed by Elemental in approving the sale.

Elemental's President and Managing Member Joseph Murabito cited regulatory uncertainty, undue financial burden, protracted timelines and "shifting criteria" in backing out.

McKnight's, 03/08/2026

She Billed for Work Not Done – Doc Gets 8 years

Bethany A. Cataldi, 54, of Chesterton, Indiana was sentenced to 97 months imprisonment and ordered to pay \$19,138,245.43 in restitution after pleading guilty to healthcare fraud.

Cataldi – a physician, and the sole owner of the Center for Otolaryngology and Facial Plastic Surgery in Highland, Indiana – billed Medicare and private insurance for thousands of balloon sinuplasty procedures that she did not perform.

Cataldi was required to forfeit significant assets, including jewelry, vehicles, musical instruments, and the contents of a number of bank accounts.

She billed approximately \$50,000,000 for these non-existent procedures for which she was actually paid almost \$20 million.

DOJ news release, 02/18/2022

CCRC Opens Daycare Center for Up To 144 Kids

ThriveMore, a faith-based, not-for-profit senior living operator in North Carolina, recently opened a childcare center at its Brookridge campus.

Brookridge residents will participate in shared activities organized by the community's life enrichment team both at the childcare center and on the senior living campus.

Residents will volunteer by reading stories, helping with art projects, participating in music and movement classes, and simply spending time engaging with the youngsters.

The children will visit the community for resident activities, holiday celebrations, performances and special events.

Brookridge employees will receive priority enrollment for their children and grandchildren, along with a ThriveMore-funded tuition subsidy.

Senior Living, 03/09/2026

ONE COLUMN

Cha-ching! Senior Care Prices Keep Spiraling Upward

A recent analysis by A Place for Mom Senior revealed senior living costs continue to rise, and providers must be more transparent about pricing.

The independent living median annual rate of \$38,400 represents a 1.75% increase from 2024 and, driven by rising resident acuity, larger increases are reported in assisted living and memory care,

That breaks down to national median monthly costs of \$3,200 for independent living, \$5,419 for assisted living, and \$6,690 for memory care,

The national median annual cost of assisted living was \$65,028 in 2025, an increase of 4.4% from 2024. The annual median cost of memory care was \$80,280, an increase of 3.7% from 2024.

The highest median monthly cost of memory care was reported in Vermont at \$11,195, followed by assisted living in Washington, D.C., at \$8,960, and independent living in Delaware at \$5,250, according to the report's most expensive state-level median monthly costs.

As costs rise, senior living providers must continue to be transparent about pricing and care costs, according to APFM Chief Community Relations Officer Margaret Cabell.

"In our work with families, we consistently see affordability as their number one concern," Cabell said. "Communities must clearly explain what families are paying for, what is included in base rent, how care levels are priced, and how costs may increase over time. Families are not just evaluating price."

Cabell said the industry must educate families who often "over-or-underestimate" actual costs, i.e., overestimate what Medicare or public programs will cover and underestimate the actual costs of private-pay senior living care services.

operators who connect pricing to staffing, safety, and quality of care will be better positioned to earn the trust of families.

Senior Housing News, 02/19/2026

State May Lock Out PE Buyers Over Lawsuits

Private equity nursing home owners targeted in any legal cases over the last decade would effectively be blocked from buying or operating additional facilities in Minnesota under proposed legislation.

The bill also would prohibit private equity companies whose managers have been convicted of a crime, as well as requiring a wide range of private buyers to show that other facilities they manage have not been subject to legal judgments or “public or private litigations” in the prior decade.

Observers called that portion of HF 2771 worrisome, given that the healthcare industry is prone to litigation.

McKnight's, 03/11/2026

Navigate Respiratory Therapy as Scrutiny Grows

As many as half of all nursing home patients may benefit from respiratory therapy, given rising complexity and common conditions such as COPD, congestive heart failure and other chronic breathing and swallowing disorders.

But the same experts who see the need also see danger for skilled nursing providers, who can get paid extra to provide such services but also face mounting audit and claims denial risks.

Late last year, Zimmet Healthcare Services Group Managing Director Alicia Cantinieri named a Respiratory Special Care High designation a key driver of audit findings and denials.

McKnight's, 03/10/2026

Maryland Lawmakers Addressing Elder Care

With the number of Marylanders 65+ growing by over 3% annually — and costs for senior care on the rise, Maryland, like many other states, is facing a crisis experts say is only going to get worse.

And legislators are taking notice.

The Legislature is considering more than 20 bills in the current session to improve care for seniors, including boosting support for the state's growing population

of unpaid family caregivers, ease some of the costs of senior housing, provide a hike in minimum pay and a right to paid leave for at-home caregivers.

Governing.com, 02/27/2026

Longer POLST Programs Improve End-Of-Life Care

Nursing home patients are more likely to die in the facility or in hospice than in a hospital in states with mature POLST programs - Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment.

POLST are standing orders meant to assist in decision-making at the end of life to ensure patients' treatment preferences are documented.

They can help prevent care that is unwanted — or possibly unwarranted — in a patient's final days, weeks or months.

A recent study suggests continued implementation and long-term use of POLST programs streamlined advance directives among residents, helped lessen unnecessary hospitalizations and limited aggressive care at the end of life.

Journal of the American Medical Directors Association, April 2026

They Go on a Journey Without Leaving the Home

Veterans on Long Island are travelling the world again without leaving their nursing home – virtual reality.

Mynd Immersive created the VR, which was specially designed for older adults. Long Island State Veterans Home at Stony Brook University was the first in the nation to use it in its therapy.

Now it's the first with a more interactive and realistic upgrade.

There are hundreds of experiences to choose from to combat isolation and stimulate conversation.

The technology is now in more than 100 state veteran homes and Veterans Affairs medical centers.

CBS News, 03/07/2026

Briefly in the News

AMERICA: Doctors who give health advice to their patients or community that runs counter to the medical establishment face a rare but very real risk of state sanctions, including losing their license to practice. That could soon change if anti-vaccine activists succeed in getting the Supreme Court to weigh in on how broadly the First Amendment protects doctors' rights to free speech — an issue that is central to HHS Sec. Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s Make America Healthy Again movement (*Politico*).

Trilogy facilities, same store net operating income was up 18.4% for the year compared to 2024, and occupancy reached 90.6% in Q4. American Healthcare REIT's strong fourth-quarter and full-year results were fueled largely by performance at its Trilogy assets. COO Gabe Willhite cited successful Medicare Advantage rate negotiations, easing length-of-stay pressures, and a focus on higher-acuity admissions as key drivers, helping push Trilogy's Medicare rate growth to 5.2%, well above the national average (*Skilled Nursing News*).

One of the world's leading medical journals has issued a scathing rebuke of Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. to mark his first year leading the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The editorial — titled "Robert F. Kennedy Jr: 1 year of failure" — appears in the latest issue of the *Lancet* (*NPR*).

The FDA's top vaccine official Vinay Prasad, MD, MPH, will leave the agency for the second time in less than a year, according to an HHS spokesperson. Prasad, director of the Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research and the Chief Medical and Scientific Officer, has been embroiled in controversy since joining the agency. He has recently been the subject of a workplace probe over accusations that he retaliated against subordinates and verbally berated staff (*The Wall Street Journal*).

In its weekly report, the CDC reported US measles count climbed by 145, reaching 1,281 cases. For all of last year US officials confirmed 2,258 infections (*CIDRAP*).