

IN THE NEWS

News for LTC Professionals
in 100 Words-or-Less

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They said it

"This discriminates against individuals with schizophrenia who require long-term, skilled nursing care, and it operates to reduce access to necessary care and services and punishes the Plaintiff for diagnosis' that it does not have the professional authority to make" from a lawsuit challenging CMS' policing of schizophrenia treatment in nursing homes

"Facilities that perform best tend to treat infection control as an operational discipline rather than a nursing department responsibility alone" Shelly Maffia, vice president of Quality & Compliance for Proactive LTC Consulting

"It represents a significant step towards ensuring Medicare Advantage delivers on its promise to America's seniors" Clif Porter, president and CEO of the American Health Care Association / National Center for Assisted Living urging passage of MA reform bill in Congress

Providers Urge Quick Passage of MA Reform Bill

New federal legislation aims to make post-acute care services more accessible and streamline prior authorization approval in Medicare Advantage.

Providers are quickly lining up behind the bipartisan Act introduced Monday by a House group composed mostly of physicians.

The House sponsors said they want to tackle inconsistent coverage decisions and administrative barriers that are interfering with timely treatment as MA enrollment continues to increase. In 2026, enrollment saw its slowest growth since 2007, but penetration is now at 54%.

Among its features the bill expands access to post-acute care and streamlines prior authorization processes, requiring approval within 72 hours.

McKnight's, 04/24/2026

Provider Sues CMS to Stop 'Weaponizing' Schizo Audits

An Illinois nursing home is suing to stop federal regulators from docking providers' star ratings over unsatisfactory audits of schizophrenia diagnoses.

Forest City Rehab and Nursing Center was audited in 2025 and informed that April that CMS contractors found it had been "erroneous" in its treatment of residents with schizophrenia and lowered its star rating to One-Star for six months.

CMS said Forest City had provided incorrect coding of the schizophrenia diagnosis and/or the use of antipsychotic medications."

The suit argues CMS is violating the Constitution's Due Process clause by not giving the facility the right to appeal.

McKnight's, 04/19/2026

Supply Chain Uncertain Meds Availability in Doubt

In the US Pharmacopeia's 2025 Vulnerable Medicine List (VML), USP identified 100 clinically important medicines that are most at risk of disruption based on weaknesses such as limited supplier diversity, manufacturing complexity, and single-country sourcing.

Injectable drugs account for 63% of the vulnerable medicines on the list, reflecting their greater manufacturing complexity and fragility. These include clinically important drugs such as anesthetics, antibiotics, intravenous fluids, pain medications, and chemotherapy agents.

Drugs taken orally in the form of tablets and capsules compose the second-largest category, at 22%

USP, 04/16/2026

Drug Prices Dropping? Dems Say 'Hey Prez - Prove It'

Calls for more details about President Trump's drug pricing deals are intensifying, with Senate Democrats unveiling legislation as part of a push questioning whether the arrangements really help consumers.

The "most favored nation" deals with 16 pharmaceutical companies are a signature health policy accomplishment

the administration is already touting ahead of the midterm elections.

While it stands little chance of advancing, the measure raises doubts about the administration's transparency. Polling indicates most of the public is skeptical Trump will deliver and lower drug costs for people like them.

Axios, 04/21/2026

Blood Test Can Predict Early Signs of Alzheimer's

A blood test of pTau217 an Alzheimer's disease biomarker, predicted a faster buildup of Alzheimer's disease pathology, even when initial brain scans appeared normal, among cognitively healthy older adults.

Results showed that increases in pTau217 frequently happened before amyloid PET scans became positive, demonstrating the measure's predictive capabilities.

"We used to think that PET scan detection was the earliest sign of Alzheimer's disease progression," said lead author Hyun-Sik Yang, MD "But now we are seeing that pTau217 can be detected years earlier, well before clear abnormalities appear on amyloid PET scans."

Nature Communications., 04/14/2026

It's Merely Congress' Typical Exercise in Futility

The U.S. House of Representatives has passed a resolution that would require the Trump administration to extend temporary legal protections for Haitian migrants, many of whom work in long-term care.

The House voted 220-207 largely along party lines to extend Haiti TPS through 2029. Ten Republicans joined all Democrats in approving the resolution.

A cloud hangs over the resolution development, however, in that the Senate seems unlikely to follow suit and even if it does President Trump is all but certain to veto it.

Senior Living, 04/20/2026

"It is useless to try to hold a person to anything he says while he's madly in love, drunk, or running for office."

— Shirley MacLaine

IN THE TRENCHES

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

NEW YORK: A physician admitted in federal court to orchestrating a multimillion-dollar fraud scheme that exploited the **Covid-19** pandemic by billing insurance companies for medical services his testing clinics never provided. Ali Rashan, 42, an anesthesiologist pleaded guilty to fraudulently billing insurers for Covid-19 testing services and creating fake medical records to cover up the scheme. The fraud caused at least \$24 million in losses to Medicare, Medicaid and private insurance providers (**DOL**).

AMERICA: Big swings in federal **vaccine** policy are creating confusion for some parents and clinicians. A federal judge recently struck down HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s new, shortened list of recommended vaccines for all kids. But with the Trump administration likely to appeal, the situation is in flux. Meanwhile, cases of vaccine-preventable illnesses such as measles, mumps, and whooping cough continue to accumulate nationwide (**KFF Health News**).

AMERICA: Older adults who received a high-dose influenza **vaccine** (H-IIV) experienced a decreased risk of developing Alzheimer's disease compared with those who received a standard dose. The results showed that H-IIV was associated with significantly lower AD risk during the 25 months following vaccination. The effect was especially pronounced among women (**Neurology**).

THE WORLD: Two kinds of bacteria that naturally occur in the respiratory microbiome may help protect against long COVID when present in higher amounts. Findings of a recent study highlight how differences in the bacterial composition of the upper respiratory tract may be linked to **long-COVID** severity (**Microbiology Spectrum**).

AMERICA: Researchers have found that while **influenza vaccines** were effective at preventing hospitalizations and outpatient visits among U.S. kids in recent years, uptake remained low and fell further in the years since the COVID-19 pandemic (**MedPage Today**).

AMERICA: **RSV** is a common respiratory virus that typically causes a mild illness like a cold. But it can cause serious illness for young children. The RSV season usually starts in the fall, peaks in the winter and continues into spring. Immunization is recommended through the end of March in most states. But this year, nearly all of those states have extended the immunization period through the end of April for infants and toddlers (**CNN**).

AMERICA: **Yellow fever** outbreaks in recent years and subsequent **vaccine** shortages have highlighted a need for updated shots that can be produced more rapidly. To help speed production, an investigational live-attenuated yellow fever vaccine is being developed that is produced in Vero cells instead of eggs. In this randomized phase II trial, the novel yellow fever vaccine proved "noninferior" to the FDA-approved shot (**New England Journal of Medicine**).

AMERICA: A Politico Poll found that **vaccine** skepticism among Americans is widespread, indicating that one of Health Secretary Kennedy's animating priorities is gaining traction. Results from the March poll of 3,851 U.S. adults show that a plurality of Americans question the safety of vaccines, support reducing the number administered and believe that people's right to decide what they put in their bodies is more important than preventing the spread of disease (**Politico**).

AMERICA: Twenty years after the approval of the first vaccines against human papillomavirus (HPV), studies continue to find new benefits. Although **HPV** vaccines are best known for preventing cervical cancer in women, a large new study shows that the shots are also associated with a dramatic drop in the risk of HPV-related cancers in men and boys, too (**CIDRAP**).

AMERICA: A new study found a sustained drop in childhood vaccinations could cost the US about \$7.8 billion in measles outbreaks over five years. The warning comes as vaccine policy and public confidence face fresh pressure under the second Trump administration. Health Sec. Kennedy has moved to reshape a key federal vaccine advisory panel, raising concerns among public health experts, while the US is already seeing more than 1,700 measles cases this year (**Bloomberg**).

AMERICA: Despite the wide availability of **tetanus vaccines**, US cases of the life-threatening disease continue to occur among people of all ages, especially those who are unvaccinated or under-vaccinated, but at low levels. A study, in the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, was based on case data from the National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System from 2009 to 2023 (**CIDRAP**).

AMERICA: Weekly visits to emergency rooms for **tick bites** are at the highest level since at least 2017, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). During the most recent week, 71 per 100,000 ER visits were due to tick bites, compared to the average of about 30/100,000. Currently, CDC data shows the Northeast is reporting the most ER visits for tick bites (**ABC News**).

SAN FRANCISCO: public health officials have confirmed the city's first case of clade I **mpox**, a strain of the virus that officials say may cause more severe illness than the type behind the outbreak in 2022. The case was identified in an unvaccinated San Francisco adult who was hospitalized and is now improving. The person reported close contact with someone who had traveled internationally (**San Francisco Chronicle**).

COVID-19, 04/23/2026

World Total Cases
779,213,537

World Total Deaths
7,114,282

U.S. Total Deaths
1,237,430

World Health Organization

Feds Delay Minn.'s Minimum Wage Plan for SNFs

Under the still pending Minnesota state law, nursing facility employees must earn at least \$19 an hour this year and \$20.50 in 2027, with workers who have nursing licenses netting substantially more.

The wage floor must receive approval from CMS because it stipulates that CMS will provide \$18 million to Minnesota Medicaid to help nursing homes pay for the salary bumps. The state also chips in \$18 million.

CMS officials have 90 days to examine the funding request, but if they ask for more information the clock restarts. CMS asked for more information on day 89.

KFGO-TV, 04/10/2026

The Top Schools for Graduate Nursing Degrees

For nurses looking to obtain an advanced degree here are the top schools.

Emory University in Atlanta snagged first place in the nursing school master's program rankings for the second year in a row, followed by Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. Duke, North Carolina, and Ohio State tied for third place.

As for the best Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) programs, Johns Hopkins took top billing, Emory and Rush University in Chicago in the second and third spots. Fourth place was a four-way tie between Duke, UCSF, University of Michigan and University of Washington.

U.S. News & World Report, 04/07/2026

Docs Say Dropping BMI to ID Obesity is Not a Good Idea

In a guideline communication, a group of experts from the Endocrine Society are warning that as has recently been suggested, moving away from body mass index (BMI) alone to diagnose obesity may delay treatment for millions of patients,

Instead, the diagnostic overhaul may overcomplicate routine clinical care.

"How obesity is defined has real consequences for patients argued

Ranganath Muniyappa, MD, PhD, of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases in Bethesda, Maryland. "Diagnostic definitions influence who qualifies for treatment, how clinicians manage care and how insurers determine coverage for medications and surgery."

MedPage Today, 04/02/2026

Proposed Obesity Criteria Could Delay Care

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"How obesity is defined has real consequences for patients," argued Ranganath Muniyappa, MD, PhD, of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases in Bethesda, Maryland. "Diagnostic definitions influence who qualifies for treatment, how clinicians manage care and how insurers determine coverage for medications and surgery."

MedPage Today, 04/02/2026

Proposed Help for Mentally Ill in Nursing Homes

New legislation to increase the frequency of required Department of Human Services (DHS) follow-up visits for residents of Illinois nursing homes who have been diagnosed with a serious mental illness.

Introduced by Rep. Nicolle Grasse, the bill makes changes to the state's Nursing Home Care Act.

DHS follow-up visits on patients checking into nursing homes are required after 60 days, not 90 days; DHS visits are required after a significant change in a physical or mental condition; and DHS is required to remove the need for unnecessary conflict-of-interest waivers for pre-admission screenings.

Rep, Nichole Grasse news release, 04/01/2026

ONE COLUMN

Parkinson's Costs Expected to Be \$112B By 2045

Costs associated with the treatment of Parkinson's disease, including direct medical costs and lost productivity from patients and caregivers, was about \$52 billion in 2017 and more than \$82 billion in 2024.

A report by the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research indicates the costs are projected to grow to \$79 billion by 2037 and \$112 billion by 2045.

"Our analysis of indirect medical costs underscores the increasing load borne by persons with Parkinson's disease or atypical parkinsonism and their care partners in terms of workforce participation, earnings loss, and productivity loss."

Results showed that an estimated 1.2 million adults 18 years and older in the US have AP or PD in 2024, with adults 65 and older representing the largest share (75%) of this population.

Researchers estimated that this population would grow to 1.5 million in 2035 and then to 1.7 million in 2045.

Although medical cost attributed to the disease have remained stable since 2019, the research team's comprehensive approach identified significantly higher indirect medical costs and nonmedical costs."

Additionally, the vast majority (87%) of the PD or AP population were eligible for Medicare coverage.

The Medicare eligible population accounted for almost 90% of \$23.8 billion in total excess medical costs attributable to PD and AP in 2024 while the total indirect and nonmedical costs of PD and AP were \$58.4 billion the same year.

The study builds on a previous study conducted by MJFF that showed the total cost for Parkinson's in the United States was about \$52 billion in 2017. The researchers now suggest that the total economic burden associated with Parkinson's would jump to \$102.8 billion in 2035 and \$112.4 billion in 2045.

Senior Living, 4/08/2026

New Rules and a New Board for Kansas Nurses

Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly has signed new legislation that voids over 20 years of nursing board disciplinary actions and vacates every seat on the current nursing board.

The new law also sets up a pathway and fees for late license renewal, with a grace period of 30 days, and requires that all future board members be subject to state senate confirmation.

All seats on the board must be vacated by July 1, when the governor will appoint a new interim board. A full board must be appointed by the governor by the beginning of next year.

MedPage Today, 04/16/2026

Providers: the Pennsylvania BAF is Killing Us

LTC facilities in Pennsylvania say a state funding quirk reimburses providers below the cost of care, pushing some operators to the financial brink - it's called BAF, the Budget Adjustment Factor.

Testimony before a Senate committee last week reported that nearly 40 nursing facilities have closed since 2020.

After the state calculates the cost to care for residents, the BAF formula re-divides that amount using the dollars allocated under the state budget.

If the commonwealth doesn't increase that line item, the BAF will lower the actual reimbursement rate.

WESA-FM NPR, 04/18/2026

Eight Charged in \$50 million Hospice Fraud Scheme

Federal authorities have arrested eight individuals accused of orchestrating a multi-million dollar Medicare fraud scheme involving sham hospice operations.

The Department of Justice charges allege the defendants schemed to defraud the nation's healthcare system of more than \$50 million, including by running sham hospice care facilities in California that

bilked Medicare by using people without terminal illnesses as beneficiaries.

Several hospice company owners plus three nurses, a chiropractor and a psychologist were charged.

California has been a target of the Trump administration's crackdown on hospice and other types of healthcare fraud.

DOJ, 04/02/2026

Hackers Dupe Nursing Home Out Of \$108K

A nonprofit nursing home was bilked out of nearly \$110,000 after suspects hacked their way into an email thread about legitimate heating system repairs and redirected payments to a bogus company.

Police in Pennsylvania and Colorado are now on the case, having charged two men with theft by deception, conspiracy and dealing in proceeds of an unlawful act after police said they stole \$108,176.50 from Trillium Place by Tandem Living.

Police traced two payments to a Colorado bank and suspects Shawn Patrick Martin, 59, of Denver and Sandro Dzigoshvili, 36, of Brooklyn, NY.

McKnight's, 04/14/2026

Three-fourths of Healthcare Workers Got a Flu Shot

Physicians and pharmacists had among the highest rates of influenza and COVID-19 vaccination among healthcare workers in the 2024-2025 season, while nurses came in toward the bottom, according to an annual CDC survey.

Among 2,650 surveyed healthcare workers, 76.3% got a flu vaccine in 2024-2025. Rates were highest among pharmacists (94.6%) and doctors (92.6%), followed by nurse practitioners (NPs; 88%) and nurses (79.8%),

COVID-19 vaccinations jumped significantly from 31.3% during the prior season to 40.2% in 2024-2025.

The highest rates were again among doctors (46.7%) and pharmacists (41.3%), followed by NPs (32.4%) and nurses (26.8%),

MedPage Today, 04/04/2026

Briefly in the News

Skilled nursing deals made up more than one-third of publicly announced mergers and acquisitions in the senior care sector last quarter, as independent living and continuing care retirement community deals remained at low levels. Overall, there were 231 public deals in senior living and skilled nursing during the first quarter of 2026, with skilled nursing accounting for 36% (**LevinPro LTC**).

Citations issued by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services from January through March 2026 included 1,523 for infection prevention lapses, which were cited in 12.2% of all surveys. In second place, 9.5% of surveys involved accidents and resident safety, with falls topping the list as the primary issue (**Senior Living**).

Nursing home audit success depends on proactive habits. Providers who regularly review their own documentation, stay informed about Medicare policies and audit trends and make sure each patient encounter is clearly documented and individualized are on the right track. The smallest of gaps, or easy fixes, can trigger audits, according to clinical leaders presenting the Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medical Association (PALTC) conference last week. (**Skilled Nursing News**).

Nursing home workers at five metro-area facilities conducted a three-day strike on Monday in response to what they say are unfair labor practices. The strike involves nursing homes, Cerenity Care at Humboldt and four affiliated Monarch Healthcare Management facilities, the company that operates The Estates (**Minnesota Public Radio**).

Researchers from Tulane University and the Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System used hospital EHR to retrospectively assess whether syphilis infection is independently tied to an increased risk of adverse cardiovascular outcomes in adults served by a New Orleans health care system. They found that US adults diagnosed as having late-stage syphilis are at higher risk for major cardiovascular conditions such as stroke and heart attack, as well as death, than those without the infection (**JAMA Network Open**).