

IN THE NEWS

News for LTC Professionals
in 100 Words-or-Less

Edited by Drew Vogel

drewvogel5255@msn.com

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They said it

"Poul Thorsen allegedly stole more than \$1 million in federal grant money by submitting fabricated invoices and diverting funds to his personal bank accounts" U.S. Attorney Theodore S. Hertzberg after autism researcher Thorsen a Danish physician who co-authored work demonstrating no links between childhood vaccines and autism, was extradited from Germany and charged in the U.S.

"When seniors require hospitalization, their focus should be on their health and getting well, not on how they were admitted" Maine Sen. Susan Collins on a bill to count "observation status towards the 3-Day Stay

Tell Me Again – What's the Definition of Insider Trading?

President Trump last winter bought as much as \$680,000 in Eli Lilly stock.

In May the federal government released ethics disclosures revealing a list of stock and bond trades made on President Trump's behalf through March.

In healthcare, seven trades for Eli Lilly — a company valued by the stock market at just under \$1 trillion — stand out because the timing of the purchases coincides with several favorable government decisions benefiting the drugmaker's GLP-1 business, including progress toward a long-held goal: qualifying the drugs for reimbursement from Medicare.

During that period, and just afterward, several Trump administration initiatives ultimately benefited Lilly.

Post-COVID Occupancy Climbing Albeit Slowly

Skilled nursing occupancy gains are slowing but still continuing in 2026.

In the first quarter of 2026, skilled nursing occupancy rates surpassed 87%, representing the highest level recorded since 2016.

Annual rent growth is above 5% representing the fastest pace of rent growth seen since 2008, according to the report.

Nursing home employment is improving slowly, remaining below pre-pandemic levels, according to the report.

Job growth slowed to 2.6% from January to March, marking another year so far of job growth deceleration.

Skilled Nursing News, 05/27/2026

Arbitrator Says Reinstate - Company Goes to Court

Monarch, a Minnesota nursing home company is asking a federal court to toss out an arbitrator's finding that directed it to reinstate an employee longevity bonus launched during the pandemic.

Under the program, billed as a way to keep employees in the COVID era, frontline staff could earn \$2,500 a quarter, or \$10,000 annually, through 2031.

SEIU representing employees at four Monarch Healthcare Management facilities filed a grievance in 2024, to compel company leaders to stop telling members directly about the program's end.

Monarch claims the arbitrator exceeded his authority in ordering the program to be reinstated.

McKnight's, 05/28/2026

CMS to Relaunch PEPPER Reports After 3-Year Hiatus

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services said Thursday it will relaunch PEPPER reports for all provider types in "coming months," restoring an important tool many nursing homes use for internal compliance and auditing purposes.

The Program for Evaluating Payment Patterns Electronic Report reveals how often and to what extent facilities are billing traditional Medicare for key therapy and nursing services, and how long they're keeping patients in-house.

Claims data is used to show how a single facility's claims in targeted, high-risk areas stack up against averages in their state and the nation.

McKnight's, 05/28/2026

\$2M Hot Coffee Deficiency Appealed in Federal Court

Potomac Falls, a Virginia nursing home, claiming it's the victim of a surveyor's misinterpretation of a non-existent temperature standard for coffee service, has formally appealed its \$1.8 million penalty in federal court.

Ten years ago, HHS issued a \$6,550 per day CMP for 272 days stemming from a dime-sized burn caused when a resident had a seizure and spilled coffee on his stomach. He had lived at the facility for more than 10 years without a similar occurrence.

In its filing against HHS, attorney Alan Horowitz highlighted earlier testimony by the lead surveyor who conceded there is "no regulation for hot coffee."

McKnight's, 05/24/2026

Providers Urge CMS to Go Slow on Fraud Crackdown

Providers are urging CMS to proceed carefully with its anti-fraud initiative for health care, warning that overly broad enforcement actions could increase administrative burden and disrupt care.

CMS introduced its Comprehensive Regulations to Uncover Suspicious Healthcare (CRUSH) initiative in late February and asked for industry feedback on proposals including stricter provider screening, AI-based oversight and shorter claims filing deadlines. AHCA cautioned CMS against applying blanket fraud-prevention measures that could penalize legitimate providers.

"Providers submitting enrollment data regarding ownership will be submitting sufficient information that could easily be verified through those channels" AHCA said in written comments to CMS.

Skilled Nursing News, 05/15/2026

IN THE TRENCHES

COVID-19, Flu, Measles, Vaccines, & Other Worldwide Outbreaks

THE WHITE HOUSE: The Trump administration plans to send U.S. citizens exposed to the Ebola virus to Kenya rather than bring them home for observation and treatment. The approach is a stark contrast to the way previous administrations responded to outbreaks, during which health care workers and other U.S. citizens exposed to the virus were brought home to be treated at specialized medical units. The administration this month flew an American doctor who developed symptoms to a hospital in Germany and transported six other Americans for monitoring in Germany and the Czech Republic (*The New York Times*).

ENGLAND: Production of an experimental Ebola vaccine from the developers of a Covid-19 shot is expected to begin soon, with animal studies underway as researchers race to bring a much-needed tool to the spiraling outbreak. Clinical trials for the shot could begin in two to three months, said Teresa Lambe, head of vaccine immunology, at the University of Oxford's Pandemic Sciences Institute (*Bloomberg*).

CONGO: An outbreak of a rare strain of Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo is already the third largest in history, just weeks after it likely began. It is spreading rapidly in one of the most volatile and vulnerable regions of the world, worrying U.S. and international health officials. Cuts to international health aid over the past year and a half are adding to the burden, some public-health leaders say (*The Wall Street Journal*).

THE WORLD: Following a series of confirmed cases of Andes virus—a type of Hantavirus with no vaccine or treatment—on a Atlantic cruise ship—attention is now focused on the development of new vaccines and therapies. The Vaccine Innovation Center at Korea University College of Medicine has completed animal trials on a vaccine against the virus. A universal vaccine that also protects against the Andes virus is

reportedly in the early stages of research. In the U.S. a vaccine has completed Phase 1 clinical trials (*DongA Science*).

ATLANTA: A former influential scientist who did work at the CDC is back in the grasp of U.S. law enforcement, facing financial fraud charges. Thorsen was indicted in 2011 after he allegedly "absconded" with over \$1 million in CDC grant money for autism research. Thorsen's work included co-authoring papers that found no link between autism and childhood vaccination—science which, according to medical experts, still stands today (*ABC News*).

AMERICA: The CDC has confirmed at least 51 new measles cases in a nationwide outbreak that has now reached 1,893 infections. All but nine cases are locally acquired, with the rest related to international travel. The agency reported two new outbreaks, for a total of 27. Last year the nation saw 48 outbreaks and 2,288 cases for the entire year. The United States could top that total in the coming months (*CIDRAP*).

WASHINGTON, D.C.: HHS has rescinded the committee charter for a key vaccine advisory panel after previously changing the rules to allow Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to remake the group. The agency said it is returning the group to its original framework for the next two years following an administrative error. HHS and the CDC didn't provide the appropriate amount of time for public comment before issuing the new charter on April 6 (*Bloomberg*).

WASHINGTON, D.C.: The chief spokesman for HHS Sec. Kennedy has resigned citing differences with an administration effort to advance flavored electronic cigarettes. Rich Danker, assistant secretary for public affairs, said in his resignation letter that approval of electronic cigarettes "would appeal to children and expose them to nicotine addiction, lung damage and higher risk of cancer" (*The New York Times*).

MINN & INDIANA: Commercial breeder facility in Becker County, Minnesota, reported an outbreak among 4,300 birds, which is the second avian flu detection in the county this month. In

Indiana, commercial duck facilities in LaGrange and Elkhart counties reported outbreaks involving more than 11,000 birds total. Overall, in the past 30 days USDA has confirmed avian flu in 18 flocks, including 11 commercial flocks and seven flocks of backyard birds. A total of 200,000 birds have been affected (*USDA news release*).

BANGLADESH: A measles outbreak that has killed almost 400 people—mostly children—is spreading fast, and health experts say it could carry risks even for the U.S., where cases of the disease are already at levels not seen in decades as vaccination rates continue to fall. The country's Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) says the number of suspected cases has surged to over 56,000, with regional media outlets saying many hospitals across the country are overwhelmed (*CBS News*).

AMERICA: The number of people sickened by three multistate outbreaks of the Salmonella bacterium has rocketed to 184. The CDC reported there are 150 new cases since April 23, though the true number of sick people is likely higher. At least 54 people have been hospitalized and one person died in Washington state. Over a quarter of people sickened in this outbreak are children under 5 years old (*CIDRAP*).

NORWAY: For the first time the avian influenza strain H5N5 has been detected in a polar bear. The one-year-old polar bear and a walrus were found dead in Raudfjorden on Svalbard, an archipelago and territory of Norway between Norway and the North Pole, well north of the Arctic Circle. H5N5 had previously been detected in Svalbard in wild birds, foxes, and walrus (*Norwegian Veterinary Institute news release*).

THE EUROPEAN UNION: new epidemiologic surveillance reports show reported cases of gonorrhea, syphilis, and congenital syphilis (mother-to-fetus) in European Union/European Economic Area (EU/EEA) countries have reached their highest levels in over a decade, with gonorrhea cases rising by 303% since 2015 and syphilis cases more than doubling over the same period (*CIDRAP*).

A Bill for ‘Observation’ to Count Toward 3-Day Stay

U.S. Senators Susan Collins and Peter Welch have introduced bipartisan legislation to address a loophole in the Medicare “3-Day Stay” policy that can leave seniors facing high medical costs for skilled nursing care they need after hospitalization.

Currently, patients who receive hospital care under “observation status” do not qualify for this benefit, even if their hospital stay lasts longer than three days.

The *Improving Access to Medicare Coverage Act* would allow the time patients spend in the hospital under “observation status” to count toward the required three-day hospital stay for Medicare coverage of skilled nursing care.

Sen. Susan Collins news release, 05/22/2026

Missouri’s Budget – Smoke and Mirrors and CMP Funds

Missouri has suddenly cut off access to its \$12 million Civil Monetary Penalty Reinvestment Fund, likely stripping about 5% of the state’s nursing homes of newly acquired clinical training and compliance tools.

The move comes as CMS reports \$485 million in untapped quality-improvement funds nationwide.

Robbed of its CMP spending authority by the legislature, the state has notified grant recipients that it cannot make awards moving forward.

The state can’t use the money — collected under federal regulatory authority — for anything else. The funds will sit idle and make it look to the public like the state has cut its budget.

McKiight’s, 05/25/2026

Resident-to-Resident Death Virginia SNF Slapped with IJ

Canterbury Rehabilitation and Healthcare Center, part of the Marquis Health Services chain, has been cited with immediate jeopardy after facility failed to protect multiple residents from abuse by a known aggressive resident.

One resident, hospitalized as a result of the abuse, reportedly died shortly after the incident.

Inspectors said the nursing home failed to supervise a resident with known aggressive behaviors, leading to the abuse of four other residents from March 2024 through December 2025.

All of the incidents occurred in the memory care unit.

Henrico Citizen, 05/16/2026

OIG Checked the Checks In Connecticut SNFs

The HHS OIG audited nine Connecticut SNF to determine whether they were doing The federally required background checks.

All nine of the selected nursing homes hired at least one individual whose background checks were missing.

These nursing homes did not conduct checks on approximately 17% (46 of 270) employees who had direct access to nursing home residents.

Additionally, Connecticut’s training materials on background check requirements had not been available to nursing homes since 2022.

HHS-OIG news release, 05/22/2026

Med Error Killed Patient Nurse Now Talks Safety

You may not remember the name RaDonda Vaught but four years ago she was a national story.

In 2022 Vaught was convicted of negligent homicide and sentenced to three years of probation for administering a wrong medication that killed a patient at Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

Today she makes speeches at as much as \$10,000 each across the country about happened that day in the hospital.

Her hope is that others, in an industry increasingly using automation and artificial intelligence, can understand the multiple factors that contributed to the deadly medication mix-up.

Nashville Public Radio, NPR, 05/27/2026

ONE COLUMN

What Americans Think About Food & Health

About four in ten (41%) U.S. adults say they support the Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) movement – a group largely made up of supporters of the Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement.

Yet, many of the concerns elevated by the MAHA movement about food safety and corporate influence resonate with a larger share of the public beyond those who identify as supporters.

Majorities of the public say there is not enough regulation of chemical additives in food (75%) or of pesticides used in agriculture (64%) and most adults express distrust in agricultural, food, and pharmaceutical companies to act in the public’s best interest.

Confidence in the government agencies that regulate those industries is also low; only about a third of the public express confidence in the FDA (36%) and the EPA (36%) to act independently without outside interference.

Even among voters who support the MAHA movement, health care costs are the dominant priority by a wide margin when compared with other areas of health.

When asked to select the most important health priority for the federal government, four in ten MAHA voters (42%) choose lowering health costs, twice the share who choose restricting chemical additives in the food supply (21%) and far outranking other MAHA priorities like reevaluating vaccine safety (10%), limiting corporate influence in U.S. food policy (8%), or restricting pesticide use in agriculture (8%).

Voters overall give the Trump administration low approval ratings on two key health areas elevated by the MAHA movement; about four in ten approve of the administration’s handling of vaccine policy (38%), and fewer than half approve of the administration’s handling of food policy (46%).

KFF Health Tracking Poll, 05/06/2026

Nursing Home Exposure Sends Seven to Hospital

Police in New York state say no known substance was identified following an incident at Auburn Rehabilitation and Nursing Center that sent multiple staff members and one resident to the hospital.

Officials say seven staff members and one resident went to Auburn Community Hospital.

All were treated and released.

Speculation is that the cause may have been some sort of Haz Mat event, although the exact cause remains under investigation.

Finger Lakes Daily News, 05/22/2026

Bankruptcy Trustee Sues Execs for 'Pocket-Lining'

A trustee overseeing the liquidation of 22 affiliated nursing home companies is suing several of the controlling executives, accusing them of \$17 million in unjust enrichment, and conspiracy.

Named in the lawsuit are Ephram "Mordy" Lahasky, Samuel Halper, David Gast and Joshua Farkovits who held controlling interest in the companies.

The latest development follows a long and troubled history for South Hills Operations, Comprehensive Healthcare Management Services and its network of East Coast entities.

The latest filing alleges a broader attempt to use complicated corporate structures and enterprise-wide control to divert operating revenues to insiders.

McKnight's, 05/18/2026

Myocarditis Rates Soared During Pandemic - Remain Up

COVID-19 appears to have driven a sharp rise in myocarditis (inflammation of heart muscle) cases during the pandemic. Rates have remained elevated since.

Before the pandemic, myocarditis hospitalizations were relatively stable, with annual case counts ranging from 67 to 71 between 2017 and 2019. During the pandemic, hospitalizations climbed

sharply, reaching 103 cases in 2020, 128 in 2021, and 139 in 2022, for an increase of roughly 80% above baseline.

Myocarditis hospitalizations did not return to baseline after the pandemic began to wane. Researchers recorded 96 myocarditis admissions in 2023 and 105 in 2024, about 46% higher than pre-pandemic levels.

Catheterization & Cardiovascular Interventions, 05/21/2026

Doc and Nurses Tried To Skin Uncle Sam

A federal grand jury has indicted a Utah podiatrist and two nurses who worked for him with fraud after they allegedly submitted fraudulent claims to Medicare for skin substitute services, many of which were medically unnecessary.

The alleged scam resulted in Medicare paying out \$29 million dollars in claims.

Podiatrist Ryan Ellsworth and NP Emily Kelly and RN Drake Broadbent allegedly defrauded Medicare, to fraudulently obtain money for their own financial benefit.

DOJ news release, 5/12, 2026

CMS is Looking for Techies To Knock Down Fraud

The CMS is embarking on a hiring surge after going through a significant staffing reduction last year.

CMS officials said the agency's hiring efforts are largely focused on recruiting IT talent, as well as new hires who can advance the agency's crackdown on fraudulent payments.

Tiffany Swygert, the acting deputy director of CMS' Office of Information Technology, said the agency is hiring about 1,200 employees across its operations. About 100 of those new hires will work in OIT.

Swygert said CMS is recruiting full-stack engineers and cybersecurity professionals, as well as managers to oversee its tech shop.

Federal News Network, 05/26/2026

Briefly in the News

Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. enlisted health official Stephanie Haridopolos to temporarily take on some of the responsibilities of the US surgeon general. The Trump administration has not had a confirmed surgeon general because two nominees for the role were pulled before confirmation votes in the Senate. President Donald Trump nominated radiologist and former Fox News contributor Nicole Saphier to the role last month (*Bloomberg*).

People with obesity and alcohol use disorder had fewer heavy drinking days while on semaglutide (Wegovy), a Danish randomized trial showed. Adults receiving a 2.4-mg weekly dose of GLP-1 had a 41.1-percentage-point reduction in heavy drinking days after 26 weeks compared with a 26.4-percentage-point drop for those assigned to placebo (*MedPage Today*).

The FDA has identified a ventilator recall as the most serious type. It involves React Health's VOCSN V+Pro Ventilators. The device may cause serious injury or death if it is continued to be used. React Health is removing affected devices due to a manufacturing process deviation that may result in an undetected oxygen leak condition (*FDA*).

National Health Investors continues to adjust its portfolio, reducing its holdings in skilled nursing facilities with a pending sale of over a half billion dollars to its operating partner, while completing another non-SNF acquisition ahead of its first-quarter earnings release. In late April, the REIT divested 32 skilled nursing facilities and 3 independent living facilities, selling them to its current operator, National HealthCare Corporation for \$560 million (*Skilled Nursing News*).

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