

# IN THE NEWS

News for LTC Professionals  
in 100 Words-or-Less

Edited by Drew Vogel

[drewvogel5255@msn.com](mailto:drewvogel5255@msn.com)

Vol 22

06/07/2026

## They said it

*"During the COVID-19 pandemic, state policymakers abruptly and haphazardly adopted laws immunizing nursing homes to avoid undermining residential care from what was predicted to be an overwhelming volume of tort litigation"* from a study of nursing staff hours during the pandemic

*"It's these interventions on an individual level that actually keep our system flowing. Honestly, it saves our state a significant amount of money"* Rhode Island State Rep. Teresa Tanzi after a program to keep seniors out of nursing homes was cut by the Legislature

*"We are disappointed that the final rule does not recognize the professional degrees attained by advanced practice nurses or physical and occupational therapists"* Dana Ritchie, AHCA / NCAL associate vice president of workforce and constituency services after the DOE excluded advanced nursing degrees from the definition of "professional degree"

## **EMTs & Cops May Be Telling Ombudsman About SNFs**

The DOJ and the National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care developed a series of videos and fact sheets that help frontline first responders understand when what they're seeing might be a civil or criminal offense.

They also address how responders can best document for follow-up investigations, and who else they can call on for interpretation or immediate resident aid.

It also repeatedly encourages EMTs and police to refer cases to a local ombudsman and to document exactly what they're seeing in objective ways that might be used to build civil or criminal cases.

McKnight's, 06/03/2026

## **Providers Cautious Regarding SNF-Specific Wage Index**

Nursing homes in half of all US markets could see their proposed 2.4% increase eaten away by declining wage indexes in fiscal 2027, even though many are paying all-time high rates for labor.

The federal government factors those indexes into providers' annual rates, and when local averages fall, so do payments to nursing homes in a given area — by up to 5% annually.

Despite years of complaints from skilled nursing providers, those wage indexes don't even actually reflect their workforce costs. Instead, they're based on acute-care hospital averages.

McKnight's, 06/04/2026

## **DOE Excludes Nursing, Nursing Associations Sue**

Ten nursing associations jointly filed a lawsuit challenging the Department of Education's exclusion of advanced nursing degrees from the definition of "professional degree" programs in a final rule, implementing federal student loan borrowing limits.

The rule means that those who pursue those degrees are ineligible for higher federal loan limits and some loan forgiveness programs.

In addition to nursing, degree programs also excluded from the "professional" list are those for physician assistants, physical therapists, audiologists, architects, accountants, educators and social workers.

Senior Living, 06/02/2026

## **AI 'Dropped the Ball' in Hospital Fentanyl Case**

About a year ago at Erlanger Medical Center in Chattanooga, staff noticed a nurse was slurring his words and struggling to stay awake while on duty.

The nurse ultimately failed a drug test and was fired. The nurse later admitted that for months he had pilfered and abused fentanyl left over after surgeries, sometimes daily.

The case stands out because the hospital uses Senti7, medication-monitoring

software powered by artificial intelligence and designed to detect missing drugs faster than any human can.

But for months Senti7 failed to raise alarms, overlooking missing drugs and other "inconsistencies" that "should have been flagged,"

KFF Health News, 06/03/2026

## **Senators Urge CMS to Restore Transparency**

Three U.S. Senators Cory Booker (D-NJ) Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) are pressing CMS to immediately reinstate a key transparency deadline requiring Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNFs) to report detailed information about their ownership, management, and related-party financial arrangements.

In a letter to CMS Administrator Mehmet Oz the senators said the decision to suspend that deadline has significantly weakened visibility into who controls nursing homes and how public dollars are used.

The senators wrote, "we implore CMS to immediately resume the requirement that SNFs submit ownership, managerial, and related-party disclosures and to establish an expedited deadline for full compliance."

Sen, Booker news release, 06/03/2026

## **COVID: CNA Staff Declined And Has Not Recovered**

Licensed practical nurse and registered nurse coverage did not decline significantly in states that adopted laws to protect nursing homes from many COVID-associated lawsuits.

CNAs staffing levels saw the only significant effects.

The 43 states that adopted some form of immunity law experienced a 2.5% point drop in overall staffing hours.

"Because immunity from liability removes the incentives to avoid litigation by providing high-quality care, such legislation could lead to lower-quality treatment and, consequently, worse outcomes," UCLA authors wrote.

The industry remains down 1.7% of its workforce, largely in CNAs.

JAMA Health Forum, 06/01/2026

## **IN THE TRENCHES**

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

---

**CAPITOL HILL:** Secretary of State Marco Rubio indicated on Tuesday that the United States may resume its funding of a global vaccine alliance that Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. pulled the United States out of last year, an unusual public rebuke of Mr. Kennedy's involvement in matters of global health. But Mr. Rubio suggested in pointed testimony that he was reclaiming control of the U.S. relationship with Gavi, which has historically been managed by the State Department (*The New York Times*).

**D.R. CONGO:** the World Health Organization (WHO) and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reduced the official case count of the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Uganda from nearly 1,000 cases to 321 confirmed cases, including 48 deaths in the DRC. Another 116 cases are suspected. In Uganda, the new case count is 11 confirmed cases, one confirmed death, one probable case, and one probable death (*CIDRAP*).

**D.R. CONGO:** The World Health Organization said there have been 321 confirmed cases of Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo outbreak and 116 suspected cases, marking a large drop in the number of suspected cases as hundreds were ruled out after investigation. The agency said on Tuesday there had been 48 deaths and six people had recovered in Congo (*Reuters*).

**AMERICA:** Federal funding cuts for one of America's major infectious disease surveillance programs could threaten public health responses, experts say, sparking widespread concern, particularly as a newer variant of COVID-19 continues to spread across the U.S., highlighting the need for monitoring systems. As part of the administration's budget plan, the CDC's National Wastewater Surveillance System will see its funding cut from around \$125 million a year to about \$25 million (*Newsweek*).

outbreak in Central Africa will have access to an antibody treatment that has shown great promise in animal testing but hasn't yet undergone a clinical trial to show whether it is efficacious in people. The antibody treatment, known as MBP-134, is made by San Diego-based Mapp Biopharmaceuticals, an agency within HHS that helps develop medical countermeasures for rare and emerging diseases (*Stat*).

**EAST COAST:** The FDA and CDC, in collaboration with state and local partners, are investigating a multi-state, multi-year outbreak of Listeria monocytogenes infections potentially linked to requeson, a soft cheese similar to ricotta. A total of three states – New York, Maryland and Virginia – are involved. So far 8 people are involved – 7 hospitalizations and one death (*FDA news release*).

**THE PENTAGON:** The Department of Defense has filed a motion to block a June 2 court order that required it to allow recruits with asymptomatic HIV to enlist or commission into the U.S. military. Attorneys for the Pentagon filed a motion Wednesday asking the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit to reconsider its Tuesday decision in the case, *Wilkins v. Hegseth*, which lifted a stay on prohibiting HIV-positive people whose infections are controlled by medication and who otherwise qualify from serving while the case continues (*Military Times*).

**AMERICA:** Federal funding cuts for one of America's major infectious disease surveillance programs could threaten public health responses, experts say, sparking widespread concern, particularly as a newer variant of COVID-19 continues to spread across the U.S., highlighting the need for monitoring systems. As part of the administration's budget plan, the CDC's National Wastewater Surveillance System will see its funding cut from around \$125 million a year to about \$25 million (*Newsweek*).

**FLORIDA:** The Department of Health said there have been 154 measles cases in the state this year, with the most recent cases identified in Orange and Palm Beach counties. The total comes from cases reported in 15 counties through

May 23 and is the highest number of cases reported in the state in a single year over the last 25 years. Most of the cases come from Collier County, where Ave Maria University reported an outbreak in January and February of this year (*CIDRAP*).

**MEXICO:** At least 40 Mexicans have died of measles complications since the start of 2025, ranging from babies to middle-age farmworkers. More than 17,000 infections have been confirmed in that period, four times the number in the United States. Measles is largely preventable with two shots of a common vaccine. But most of those with infections hadn't gotten it. The outbreak is traced to a 9-year-old boy who was visiting relatives in Texas (*CNN*).

**UTAH:** After 11 infants were exposed to measles at a pediatric clinic, the state Department of Health and Human Services helped administer intramuscular immunoglobulin (IMIG) as postexposure prophylaxis (PEP) and ultimately developed a protocol for statewide use amid the ongoing outbreak. None of the infants' parents declined IMIG for their child, and there were no serious or localized systemic adverse events during administration or reported in follow-up calls. Notably, none of the infants contracted measles during the 21-day monitoring period (*MedPage Today*).

**AMERICA:** The antiviral drug *ensitrelvir* prevents infection in household contacts of COVID-19 patients when given within 72 hours after symptom onset. A team led by researchers from the University of Virginia and *ensitrelvir* maker Shionogi randomly assigned participants aged 12+ who tested negative for COVID-19 but lived with an infected patient to receive either oral *ensitrelvir* or a placebo within 72 hours after the index patient developed symptoms. The COVID-19 infection rate was 67% lower in the *ensitrelvir* group than in placebo recipients (*New England Journal of Medicine*).

**"The truth will set you  
free, but first it will  
piss you off"**

**Joe Klaas**

## **Major Study: I-SNPs Can Cut End-Of-Life Hospitalizations**

Nursing home residents with dementia who were enrolled in Institutional Special Needs Plans (I-SNPs) experienced significant reductions in hospitalizations during the last month of life.

A study analyzed data on 1,415,265 Medicare beneficiaries with dementia who were long-term nursing home residents who died between 2013 and 2022.

Among all participants, nursing home I-SNP adoption was linked to overall reductions in end-of-life hospitalizations, ICU admissions and mechanical ventilation, but no changes in hospice enrollment.

*McKnight, 06/02/2026*

## **CMS Overpaid MA Plans Related to Stroke Codes**

CMS pays the Medicare Advantage plans based on diagnosis codes.

Some diagnoses – such as acute stroke – are at higher risk for miscoding, which may result in overpayments from CMS.

The HHS-OIG recently audited 97 enrollees in multiple MA organizations to examine whether submissions of the diagnosis codes complied with Federal requirements.

For all 97 sampled enrollees, the high-risk acute stroke diagnosis codes that MA organizations submitted to CMS were not supported by the medical records associated with the physician data records containing the diagnoses.

OIG estimated that CMS made \$462 million in potential net overpayments to MA organizations for 2021.

*HHS-OIG, 05/28/2026*

## **Doctronic Releases Utah AI Prescribing Pilot Results**

Early results from a controversial pilot program testing the use of artificial intelligence to automate some prescriptions refills are in and being viewed as a promising test case for how AI may next be used in healthcare.

In January, the state of Utah launched the pilot with artificial intelligence platform Doctronic.

The state of UTAH allowed the company to use its AI chatbot Doctronic to manage prescription renewals for 192 drugs used to treat chronic conditions such as diabetes, depression and high blood pressure.

The pilot is being widely watched within the industry, amid questions about its safety and legality.

*Modern Healthcare, 05/28/2026*

## **Fire in Overcrowded Nursing Home in Sri Lanka - 13 Die**

One of the 13 residents killed in a fire at an unregistered nursing home in western Sri Lanka had been restrained; another was untied and saved. Seven others remain in hospital.

According to police, 71 people were living in the home at the time of the fire, which had beds for only 15 people.

The fire was apparently caused by an electric short circuit.

The director of the home has been arrested on suspicion of causing deaths through negligence.

*AP, 06/04/2026*

## **No Supplies, Grippled, Unemployment Reinstated**

An Iowa judge has ruled a long-time caregiver at an Iowa nursing home was fired after expressing concern with her employer's alleged refusal to purchase supplies for residents.

Renee Arnold worked for the Azria Health Prairie Ridge nursing home in Mediapolis from June 1990 through December 2025, when she was fired.

In ruling Arnold was entitled to unemployment benefits, the judge stated that she found Arnold's "version of events to be more credible than the employer's recollection of those events," noting that Azria Health "did not present a witness with direct knowledge of the situation to dispute (Arnold's) testimony."

*Iowa Capital Dispatch*

## **ONE COLUMN**

### **Pandemic is Over - Suicide Has Replaced COVID-19**

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, a time to elevate the needs of the millions of Americans who have a mental health condition.

The term refers to a wide range of conditions that affect mood, thinking, and behavior, which can cause distress and problems functioning in social, work, and family activities. This year, the awareness month arrives with sobering news:

The U.S. mortality data published by the CDC revealed that suicide has replaced COVID-19 as the country's 10th leading cause of death.

Almost 49,000 people died by suicide in 2024, the most recent year for which data is available.

That year, an additional 14.3 million adults (age 18 and older) seriously thought about suicide, 4.6 million adults made a suicide plan, and 2.2 million attempted suicide.

An estimated 2.8 million adolescents (ages 12 to 17) had serious thoughts of suicide, made suicide plans, or attempted suicide.

Having a mental health condition alone does not lead to suicide. However, it is one of the risk factors that can elevate the likelihood of a person experiencing suicidal thoughts or attempting or dying by suicide.

Although there is no single cause of suicide, the CDC estimates that 49% of people who die by suicide have a current diagnosed mental health condition.

In 2024, 61.5 million adults including 11.6 million young adults (ages 18 to 25) reported having a mental health condition, up from 58.7 million adults and 11.5 million young adults in 2023.

That year an estimated 5% of U.S. adults regularly reported feelings of depression and 12% reported feelings of anxiety—the two most common conditions.

*The Pew Charitable Trusts' 05/13/2026*

## **She Gets Unemployment Even After Resident Complaints**

An administrative judge has ruled that an Iowa CNA fired after being accused of repeatedly neglecting residents' needs is entitled to unemployment benefits.

Nurse aide Abigail Kromah worked for Pine Acres Rehabilitation and Care Center in West Des Moines.

Pine Acres fired her for failing to answer call lights, not assisting residents with personal care, refusing instructions from nurses, and numerous other resident complaints.

The judge noted that although Kromah received written warnings about those issues, past acts, she was terminated for a current act – her attendance – for which she had received no such warnings.

*Iowa Capital Dispatch, 05/28/2026*

## **California AG Approves Sale With Strings of Not-For-Profit**

The California Attorney General has conditionally approved the sale of the not-for-profit Bethel Lutheran Home to for-profit Bayshire Central Valley.

Bethel has been serving seniors since 1928 and operates a single campus that includes 59 skilled nursing beds, 33 assisted living suites, and 36 independent living cottages.

The conditions include: Establishing independent state oversight through a Monitor appointed within 90 days of closing, with monitoring authority lasting 10 years; requiring continued operation as a SNF for seven years; Imposing financial safeguards for 10 years, including limits on debt or restructuring that could impair operations.

*Cal AD news release, 06/01/2026*

## **Fired Female Van Driver but Not Male - EEOC Sues**

The EEOC has sued the operator of TidalHealth – a 5-star Maryland nursing home – for sex discrimination because it fired a female van driver but not a male driver over similar incidents.

Carol Jones was terminated after a 2023 lift incident during in which she and a

resident dropped several feet but were not injured.

The agency alleged in June 2 court filings, that TidalHealth had retained a male employee who had a more serious lift issue resulting in resident injury.

The EEOC said it had notified TidalHealth of its finding that the company had violated the federal Civil Rights Act.

*EEOC news release, 06/03/2026*

## **Canadian Resident Died Wandered Away 12 Times**

A year into waiting for the state of Canada to move her to a new home, a woman with worsening dementia wandered out of her special care home for the 12th time. She died after being found unresponsive, having spent all night outside.

New Brunswick had acknowledged the woman, identified only as Alice, could not remain at the special care home where she was placed. She had been waiting for a spot in a more suitable facility for a year.

Despite that, Alice remained there until her death — with no additional safety resources or intervention from the department.

*CBC, 06/04/2026*

## **Three Vaccine Candidates Fast-Tracked for Ebola**

The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) has announced it's helping fast-track three Ebola Bundibugyo virus vaccine candidates from the University of Oxford, Moderna, and the International Aids Vaccine Initiative (IAVI).

The Bundibugyo virus has no targeted vaccine or therapeutics, and this is the fourth outbreak since it was identified in Uganda in 2007.

Moderna announced CEPI's commitment of up to \$50 million to support preclinical development and testing of the company's Bundibugyo virus vaccine candidate, developed with mRNA technology.

The WHO and Doctors without Borders speculate there are likely more than 1,000 suspected cases and more than 250 deaths.

*Stat, 06/01/2026*

## **Briefly in the News**

Medicare is advertising that adults 65 and older can get Wegovy and Zepbound, specifically for weight loss, starting in July for \$50 a month. But the agency still is not sharing how much this will cost taxpayers, who will foot most of the bill. The temporary coverage which sidesteps federal law, will unleash millions of new patients and billions of dollars in revenue for the drugs' manufacturers, Eli Lilly and Novo Nordisk (*Stat*).

Even as MAHA issues resonate, the cost of health care is a more prominent focus for voters than issues like food and vaccine policy. Most voters say health costs will have a "major impact" on their decision to vote (55%) and who they vote for (61%) in November, compared to about four in ten who say the same of vaccine or food policy (*KFF Health Tracking Poll*).

Three affiliated skilled nursing facilities in the Symphony group in Illinois have agreed to pay a total of \$300,000 resolve allegations that they violated the False Claims Act by submitting for medically unnecessary rehabilitation services. The allegations resolved by the settlement arose from a *qui tam* or whistleblower lawsuit. The whistleblower will receive \$45,000 of the recovered funds (*DOJ news release*).

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*).

Although there's variation across states, the American Council on Aging reports that the average annual cost of a shared room in a nursing home is \$119,340. As for assisted living, SeniorLiving.org estimates the current average is about \$75,756 per year (*American Council on Aging*).