

IN THE NEWS

News for LTC Professionals
in 100 Words-or-Less

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They said it

"Sometimes the greatest gift we can give is simply our presence" Florida First Lady Casey DeSantis launching a Hope Florida initiative designed to connect local churches with nursing homes

"I'm not calling 911 because we will all go to prison" RN Papy Bibb, when a resident died in a snowbank last winter after wandered outside

"Taking action that is not based on a clear and specific finding raises serious due process concerns" Katie Salsbury of Baker Donaldson on HHS plans to expand its exclusion, revocation powers

"The payoff for regulators is a system that should allow states to commit more of their current resources to facilities that need more oversight" David Wright, retired CMS director of quality, safety and oversight and developer of new Risk-based surveys

Risk-Based Surveys Will Hit Before Summer's Over

The new Risk-Based Survey on the horizon, along with its shorter duration and smaller survey teams. CMS has been testing it in about 100 facilities around the country and will spread nationwide in September.

About 12% of the top-performing nursing homes are expected to qualify.

CMS believes the payoff for regulators is a system that should allow states to commit more of their current resources to facilities that need more oversight, i.e., poor-performing facilities, while lessening the backlog of surveys.

Complaints which now make up 85% of all surveys will still be conducted in the same manner.

McKnight's, 07/22/2026

COVID in Rearview Mirror Census at Highest Since

Occupancy at freestanding nursing homes hit a 10-year high early this year, peaking at 86.7%.

The 2026 first-quarter occupancy rate in 99 primary and secondary markets may be the most solid proof of a post-COVID rebound.

The rate had plunged to 73.4% in the first quarter of 2021, but has since increased for 20 consecutive quarters, gaining a cumulative 13.3 percentage points.

Demand has slowed since it spiked in 2022 and 2023 — following that dramatic pandemic low in 2021. Facilities filled 1.3% more beds last quarter, versus 3.7% more beds in the first quarter of 2023.

NIC, 07/20/2026

Serious Deficiencies in Over 25% SNFs This Year

More than a fourth of nursing homes nationally reported at least one serious deficiency, with 5% of the deficiencies cited rising to actual harm or immediate jeopardy (IJ) posed to residents — including injury, impairment or death.

That's about 6,700 health deficiencies categorized as IJs or actual harm.

KFF found that most involved isolated incidents rather than widespread problems.

About 93% of health deficiencies in the last cycle were classified as having the potential to cause harm without resulting in actual harm to residents.

KFF found that nursing homes with lower staffing levels were more likely to receive serious deficiencies.

KFF, 07/17/2026

Terminal Prisoners Could Be Your Census Savior

Every state allows compassionate release for prisoners who can't care for themselves or have terminal illnesses and may need nursing homes or hospice.

Most facilities nationwide decline to take such prisoners, leaving them incarcerated for months — or years — after they're

paroled. In Colorado for example, it's about 200 days.

Placing terminal prisoners in nursing homes is cost effective for states — Medicaid costs far less than incarceration.

Most parolees qualify for Medicaid but last year's One Big Beautiful Bill reduces the window in which facilities can get reimbursed retroactively for new Medicaid patients from 90 to as little as 30 days.

KFF Health News, 07/21/2026

Resident Froze to Death Two Employees Charged

Two employees of Bickford Healthcare have been arrested in connection with the February death of 93-year-old resident Margaret "Peggy" Healey, who wandered away from a Windsor Locks, Conn. nursing home and died.

The suspects were identified as Papy Bibb, 53, of Manchester, and Uchenna C. Obi, 46, of Newington. Both turned themselves in to police.

Healey died of hypothermia due to environmental exposure after being found outside in a snowbank. Police determined the employees waited hours after she was found before calling 911.

Surveillance video revealed Healey was missing for more than three hours.

Western Mass News, 07/21/2026

Healthcare Data Breaches Up 14% in First Half of '26

Of the 410 attacks we recorded in 2026, 247 were on hospitals, clinics, and other direct care providers; 163 hit businesses operating within the healthcare sector.

Attacks on healthcare businesses rose nearly 35%; manufacturers saw a 36% increase.

But retailers (e.g. medical device retailers or drug wholesalers) saw the biggest increase in attacks (up 67%).

Median ransom demand: \$310,000, however, One of these was the hefty \$100 million ransom demanded from Nippon Medical School Musashi Kosugi Hospital in Japan.

Comparitech, 07/09/2026

IN THE TRENCHES

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

CONGO: Four out of every five new Ebola cases in parts of Democratic Republic of Congo have no known link to existing patients as the World Health Organization warned the true scale of the outbreak could be two to four times larger than official data suggest. so far 1,792 people of which 625 have died (*Reuters*).

ENGLAND: Children born during England's COVID lockdown appeared to have markedly lower executive function than expected for their age. Executive function is a set of mental skills that enables you to plan, focus attention and remember instructions. On two relevant scales, scores were significantly below cognitive potential. And about a third of children were one or two standard deviations away from published norms for both of those scales (*Archives of Disease in Childhood*).

THE WORLD: UNICEF said the number of children receiving the diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (DTP) vaccine has increased slightly. Almost 116 million infants (90%) globally received one dose of DTP, and 110 million babies (85%) were fully vaccinated with three shots. Both figures rose a full percentage point since 2024 (*Estimates of National Immunization Coverage*).

THE WORLD: While the report notes an increase in the number of children receiving DTP, 7.3 million of those babies never received their first dose of the measles vaccine. This drop-out makes it difficult to boost the measles vaccination to 95%—what's needed to stop outbreaks. Worldwide, only 84% of children received one dose of the measles vaccine and 77% received the second. The lagging measles vaccination rates contributed to 57 countries experiencing measles outbreaks last year, including the United States, which is experiencing decades-high numbers (*CIDRAP*).

AMERICA: With 29 newly confirmed cases, the US measles total is just 29

cases short of last year's sobering total. Of the 2,260 confirmed cases so far in 2026, all but 15 of them locally acquired. The total for all of last year was 2,289 infections, which was the most since 1991. Children under 5 account for 20% of the infections. Among all measles patients, 93% are unvaccinated or have unknown vaccine status (*CDC*).

AMERICA: A Kaiser Permanente study indicated infants born to mothers vaccinated before, during, or soon after pregnancy for COVID-19 or flu were more likely to receive vaccines than those born to unvaccinated mothers. The authors wrote "Improving maternal vaccine coverage during those times may improve child vaccine coverage, ensuring continuous protection in early life" (*Pediatrics*).

THE WORLD: For years, patients with long COVID have described neurologic symptoms like brain fog and memory problems, but scientists have struggled to identify the biology behind these symptoms. Now, a new study suggests they may be tied to measurable changes in the brain's dopamine system. Researchers used PET scans to measure a marker of dopamine neuron integrity, in 24 adults with long COVID and persistent neuropsychiatric symptoms (*eBioMedicine*).

CONGO: The Ebola outbreak in the (DRC) is now the fastest-growing Ebola outbreak in history, with 2,011 cases, including 754 deaths recorded in the past two months. At least 80% of new cases are emerging from unknown chains of transmission, Chikwe Ihekweazu, MD, the WHO health emergencies chief, told the United Nations after returning from Bunia (*CIDRAP*).

CONGO: American citizens will no longer be allowed to fly directly to the United States from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) under new federal restrictions aimed at preventing the spread of Ebola. Until now, only non-citizens were prohibited from entering the US directly from the DRC. The new 'Do Not Board' policy, requires US citizens who have been in the DRC within the previous 21 days to quarantine in a third country before entering the United States (*CIDRAP*).

AMERICA/ Mexico: A sample of lettuce from Taylor Farms that had tested positive for cyclospora was a false positive, Food and Drug Administration said. "Due to the complexity in detection of Cyclospora, FDA laboratory experts re-reviewed the sample results and have concluded that the finding does not represent true amplification and should be considered a false positive" (*CBS News*).

FRANCE: The country recorded at least 5,700 more deaths than usual during a historic heat wave last month. Public Health France said regions hit by the heat from June 17 to July 2 recorded 21,674 deaths from all causes. But without a heat wave, those same regions would have been expected to have seen approximately 15,910. The difference between expected and actual deaths — a total of 5,764 — are therefore considered to be "excess" deaths during the heat wave (*AP*).

AMERICA: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration said Wednesday it is investigating an additional cyclospora outbreak that the agency said has sickened at least 72 people. It is the latest of four continuing cyclospora outbreaks being investigated by the FDA. The largest involves at least 1,644 cases, which have been linked to shredded iceberg lettuce supplied by Taylor Farms and served at Taco Bell in five states (*The Wall Street Journal*).

AMERICA: The CDC dramatically increased its national tally of cyclosporiasis cases Tuesday, adding more than 4,000 confirmed illnesses after weeks in which state health departments had reported substantially higher numbers than the federal government. The confirmed cases count is more than double the 1,645 cases reported last week. The CDC also said it is aware of more than 7,400 additional illnesses that require further analysis to determine whether they should be counted as domestically acquired cases (*The Washington Post*).

**"The older I get, the
better I used to be."**

— Lee Trevino

The Message is: “You Will Never Be Alone”

A conversation, a bouquet of flowers, a shared meal, or simply sitting and listening can make a world of difference to someone who feels alone.

With that belief at its heart, Florida First Lady Casey DeSantis has launched a new Hope Florida initiative designed to connect local churches with nursing homes and assisted living communities, creating meaningful relationships that remind Florida's seniors they are valued, remembered, and never alone.

the initiative will utilize Hope Florida's CarePortal to help LTC facilities share volunteer opportunities with nearby congregations, making it easier for faith communities to offer companionship and support to residents.

Flagler Weekly News, 07/15/2026

Traveling SNF Nurse Disarms Knife-Wielding Man

Leceadricke Young, a traveling nurse, was leaving work at Elderwood Nursing Home in Vermont and saw a man grab a woman by her throat and slam her down.

Young went to check on the woman along with a fire captain who happened upon the scene. The assailant, later identified as 29-year-old Wayne Butchino, allegedly pulled a knife and chased the fire captain.

Young, using military-style techniques he had learned in an Explorer Scout program, disarmed the knife-wielding man and flipped him to the ground.

Police got there a few minutes later, arrested Butchino, who faces multiple charges, including attempted murder.

WCAX-TV, 07/21/2026

Insulin Pen Used on Multiple Nursing Home Residents

Anita Applegate, a licensed practical nurse, was charged by the Iowa Board of Nursing with failing to properly safeguard or secure medications and with deviating from the standards of skill ordinarily possessed by nurses.

The board alleges that Applegate admitted that while working at Royal Oaks

Nursing Center in Urbandale last year, she administered insulin and other medications intended for other residents.

In some cases, Applegate did not dispose of insulin pens from discharged residents and reused them on multiple other residents despite being aware that some residents of the facility had Hepatitis C.

Iowa Capital Dispatch, 07/15/2026

Go Slow Approach Worked With Provider's AI Startup

When Majestic Care chose to invest in a chart-auditing tool late last year as part of a broader AI strategy, clinical and operational leaders decided a smaller start might be better.

The company identified six high-performing facilities among its nearly 50, asking staff there to test each technology and provide feedback on ease of use and impact on caregiving and documentation operations.

The entire Majestic Care chain is now using the AI-powered chart review tool that looks at individual resident records, finds documentation gaps and notifies care teams before they can lead to deficiencies, civil monetary penalties “or worse.”

McKnight's, 07/19/2026

She Allegedly Stole \$150K+ From N.Y. Nursing Home

A Senior Account Specialist at a nursing home in Rochester, N.Y. faces charges grand larceny for allegedly stealing \$154,525.99 from residents.

Tammy Echols, 56, used her position in the St. John's Home business office to issue checks from the facility to friends, associates and businesses to which she owed money.

She also issued checks to friends and associates who would transfer the funds to Echols after taking a small handling fee.

The investigation found that the businesses Echols issued checks to include a local florist, a bakery, and a construction contractor.

WHAM-TV, 07/20/2026

ONE COLUMN

A “force multiplier” New Exclusion Authority For CMS

Federal health officials have doubled down on plans to expand how and when providers can be excluded from the Medicare and Medicaid systems.

In a press conference highlighting the deferment of more than \$1 billion in Medicaid payments to California and Minnesota, HHS Sec. Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. also disclosed more details about new financial reviews they're using to prevent fraudulent payments.

In addition to payment suspensions, CMS revoked 1,413 providers and suppliers in the first quarter of 2026 – the largest quarterly increase on record.

Kennedy also said he was using his authority to immediately give CMS exclusion authority. Previously that role belonged only to the HHS OIG.

The secretary said CMS now would be able to “remove bad actors from federal healthcare programs, and in many cases, to permanently ban them from returning.”

Inspector General T. March Bell said the OIG excluded 2,600 providers on its own last year, but he expects HHS to be even more aggressive with more power.

“This is going to be a force multiplier,” Bell said. “It's going to create additional momentum, and it's going to exclude additional bad actors.”

Though CMS administrator Mehmet Oz on Tuesday said CMS would use its new exclusion authority “judiciously,” other comments at an hour-long press conference raised eyebrows.

Oz said over \$42 million of Medicaid payment deferments announced Tuesday were tied to claims from 870 providers flagged through fraud detection analytics.

But then he added: “We identify people as being of a character that have historically defrauded the government. We don't trust them, and when we see bills from them, we scrutinize them more aggressively.”

McKnight's, 07/21/2026

Morning Cup of Joe Can't Hurt, Might Help

Caffeine consumption can be safely tolerated in reasonable amounts in most people, according to a review by the American Heart Association (AHA).

The AHA said "The convergence of evidence from large cohort studies and small randomized controlled trials supports the conclusion that moderate caffeine or coffee consumption is safe for most adults."

It may lower risk of cardiovascular disease, including coronary heart disease, stroke, heart failure, and atrial fibrillation as well as hypertension and type 2 diabetes.

Circulation, 07/20/2026

Like Driving, Drinking And Nursing Don't Mix

The Iowa Board of Nursing received a complaint that Taylor Delude, a registered nurse tested positive for alcohol use in Dec. 2025, while working at Select Specialty Hospital in Des Moines. She was fired.

Delude then self-reported to the Iowa Professional Health Program for nurses but subsequently decided she did not want to complete the program due to expense involved.

The board then charged Delude with practicing nursing while under the influence of alcohol.

Delude has agreed to a six-month suspension of her nursing license, which will be followed by a two-year probationary period that will involve chemical screening and monitoring.

Iowa Capital Dispatch, 07/15/2026

Former Nursing Home Owner Indicted in Fraud Scheme

Rajiv (Raj) Shah who lives in Palm Beach County, Florida and owns 91% of a nursing home in Rock Island, Illinois, was indicted last month with conspiracy to commit health care fraud, health care fraud and wire fraud in a nationwide scheme.

The charges were announced as part of the DOJ's "2026 National Health Care Fraud Takedown," targeting hundreds of defendants.

The federal charges are connected to a \$64 million scheme to submit fraudulent claims to Medicare for medically unnecessary DME. Durable Medical Equipment is medically reusable devices such as wheelchairs, hospital beds, and CPAP machines used in homes.

KWQC-TV, 07/14/2026

Thousands of Nurses Strike in Boston

Over 4,000 Brigham and Women's Hospital nurses and Mass General Brigham (MGB) home care clinicians took to the picket lines recently for a five-to-seven-day work stoppage, making history as Massachusetts' largest ever nurses' strike.

Nurses with the Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA) picketed following months of failing to reach a contract at the main Brigham and Women's campus.

MBG brought in nearly 1,300 nurses to replace the 4,000 on strike and over 175 home care clinicians to replace the 450, stating that Brigham and Women's "remains open."

Boston Herald, 07/14/2026

AI Speeds Up Development of New Drugs

Artificial intelligence is dramatically speeding up drug development and priming a bigger automation push that's changing the trajectory of early-stage pharma research.

A survey of 80 biopharma leaders found that AI is compressing drug developers' preclinical costs and timelines by as much as 70%.

That's fueling demand for cutting-edge software, sequencing tools and computer models that will help churn out more experimental treatments in the next five years.

AI can't replace scientific intuition. But the way it can streamline the grueling R&D before human testing begins is making computer screens as important a feature of drug design as traditional laboratories.

Axios, 07/20/2026

Briefly in the News

One of Rhode Island's most-wanted fugitives, a former doctor charged with sexual assault but on the run for 20 years, appears to have been living a secret life as a biotech executive. Ronald Fischer, 70, was arrested last week by federal and Rhode Island authorities after they tracked and boarded a 56-foot sailboat cruising off the coast of New Jersey. The former anesthesiologist disappeared in 2005 while on trial for first-degree sexual assault (*Stat*).

Fatty liver disease can fuel the most aggressive form of colon cancer, a new study says. People with fatty liver disease are more prone to have their colon cancer travel to their liver as well, causing their survival odds to plummet (*Nature*).

People who've been severely injured in an accident might have a lower risk of death if doctors pump them full of vitamin C. High doses of intravenous (IV) vitamin C appear to reduce the risk of death and sepsis in trauma patients. Vitamin C might even shorten hospital stays following an injury (*BMJ Military Health*).

Very high levels of p-tau217, a marker of amyloid burden in the brain, predicted future risk of cognitive impairment such as Alzheimer's Disease, among older adults who were initially unimpaired. Using different plasma assays and definitions of cognitive impairment researchers found a "consistent pattern" emerged: those with very high p-tau217 had an estimated 38% risk of cognitive impairment over 5 years and an estimated 78% risk over 10 years (*JAMA*).

TrumpRx, the website promoted by President Trump to give patients discounts on drugs, is currently offering links to discounts on fewer than 12% of the more than 800 brand-name drugs made by the participating pharmaceutical companies (*NPR*).

Spouses of people with dementia had a higher risk of developing dementia themselves, a matched cohort study of nearly 1 million married people in Taiwan showed. Compared with unexposed spouses, both husbands and wives of dementia patients had a higher risk of all-cause dementia, corresponding to roughly three additional cases per 100 spouses over 5 years (*JAMA Network Open*).