

IN THE NEWS

News for LTC Professionals
in 100 Words-or-Less

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They said it

"The epidemic continues to grow and continues to kill" Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus Director-General of WHO on the Ebola outbreak in the Congo where there has been at least 7,258 confirmed cases and 3,510 deaths

"It has been the honor of my life to serve LeadingAge for the past 10 years as president and CEO, and for 10 years before that as chief operating officer" Katie Smith Sloan announcing her retirement as LeadingAge CEO set for March

"We've had patients that have shown up in our outpatient offices. We've had patients show up in the hospital. We've had patients that have come in for other problems and then develop measles while they're in the hospital" Dr. John Goldman an infectious disease specialist for the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center

Deportation Fears Cause Drop in LTC Staffs

Almost half of Administrator and other leaders cite staff retention as an area that requires significant investment in the next year.

Most of the responses to a recent McKnight's survey came after the Supreme Court cleared the way for the Feds to terminate the Temporary Protected Status for Haitians and Syrians.

Of facilities 12.8% said they have lost immigrant workers up from 8.6% last year.

Nearly half (48.8%) of the organizations said as many as 10% of their workers were foreign-born. Only 13.3% said they had no foreign-born workers.

McKnight's, 09/10/2026

MDS Manual Updates Target Reporting Conflicts

CMS has published an updated manual for the MDS Resident Assessment Instrument, pleasing many for providing clarifying language on everything from state-coding conflicts to dementia screening and wound care.

The interpretation changes come ahead of a new fiscal year in which there are no data sets or major items being added to the MDS, and the skilled nursing quality reporting program will actually shave off reporting of two COVID-era vaccination metrics.

But manual updates do help providers understand what on-site surveyors and desk-reviewers are looking for as they inspect and audit nursing homes for compliance with charting and documentation rules.

McKnight's, 09/18/2026

New Federal Bill Targets MA Clawbacks

Medicare Advantage plans could be sharply limited when trying to clawback payments under new bipartisan legislation introduced that addresses retroactive reimbursement changes.

The bill targets retroactive reimbursement and requires MA insurers to honor their original coverage decisions.

Under the act, insurers would be prohibited from retroactively denying care, scaling back approved coverage or taking back payments for services that met prior authorization standards.

The legislation would protect patients and providers from insurance companies that frequently reverse or change coverage decisions. Nursing homes have frequently complained about such clawbacks, noting that they effectively punish providers for providing agreed-upon care.

What's with COVID? Get Ready, It's Gearing Up

Just as Americans are dealing with the tail end of the "summer surge," the fast-approaching respiratory illness season

has COVID-19 on the minds of health care providers once again.

The U.S. experienced a cycle of rising cases in the late summer, part of a multi-year pattern colloquially called the "summer surge." Another seasonal uptick is expected come fall as cold and flu season starts.

Data from WastewaterSCAN, a Stanford University-led tool that tracks disease presence by testing wastewater samples nationwide, shows that COVID-19 is in the "high" category as of Sept. 18, with August levels up 168% compared with July.

USA Today, 09/19/2026

Report Shares Keys To Expanding LTC Workforce

Low wages, federal immigration policies and the low quality of jobs are challenging LTC recruitment and retention efforts. Employers are keys to the solution.

The need for a bigger workforce comes as the nation's population of adults aged 85 or more years is expected to almost triple by 2060.

The direct care workforce grew from 3.6 million in 2015 to almost 5.8 million in 2025, making it the largest workforce in the nation

This upward trend is expected to continue, with the workforce projected to add more than 886,000 new jobs from 2025 to 2035, a 14% increase.

PHI's "Direct Care Workers in the United States: Key Factors 2026," 09/15/2026

After Ten Years, Sloan is Riding Off into the Sunset

Katie Smith Sloan, who has been president and CEO of LeadingAge and its 5300 nonprofit providers for the past ten years, is planning to step down effective March 31, 2027.

Sloan was a leading voice for nursing homes during the COVID-19 pandemic and a stalwart opponent of the federal nursing home staffing mandate.

In 2022, two years into the pandemic, for example, she reflected on deaths among seniors and took lawmakers and public health officials to task for lapses that left providers and their charges vulnerable.

McKnight's, 09/14/2026

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

PHILADELPHIA: City health officials say there was a possible measles exposure at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, including in the hospital's neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). Officials said they're working to give all infants in the NICU a preventative antibody treatment to help protect them from measles. Measles is a highly contagious virus that can be prevented in adults with a vaccine, but infants are too young to vaccinate (*WHYY Radio*).

MISSOURI: A person who boarded a train in Missouri late last month has tested positive for measles, becoming the first confirmed case in a St. Louis County resident in 20 years. The person boarded a Chicago-bound train Aug. 27 that also carried another person who boarded the Missouri River Runner (Train 318) in Sedalia and was later confirmed to have measles. Jackson County health officials confirmed that initial case earlier this week (*St. Louis Public Radio*).

ILLINOIS: After two measles cases were reported so far this year in the county, the Kane County Health Department is offering free measles, mumps and rubella, or MMR, vaccinations through Sept. 25 — regardless of individuals' insurance status (*Aurora Beacon-News*).

FLORIDA: Locally acquired dengue fever continues to spread in Hillsborough County, according to the latest weekly update from the Florida Department of Health. There were 39 additional cases of the mosquito-spread disease reported in Hillsborough from Sept. 6-12, according to most recent data made available. The county has increased its anti-mosquito spraying efforts. Also, The Florida Department of Health is proposing a rule that would allow pharmacists to administer a vaccine against chikungunya, a mosquito-borne illness that can cause fever and severe joint pain (*WUSF*).

MINNESOTA: The Board of Animal Health confirmed that a cow in Brown County has tested positive for rabies after it was euthanized. The board said the owner of the heifer noticed the animal behaving oddly on Sept. 1 as it laid flat with its head down. A veterinarian observed the animal the same day and the owner had administered oral medication with bare hands. Another veterinarian examined the animal the following day and also gave it oral medication without wearing gloves (*MPR News*).

NEW YORK: The State Department of Health launched an online dashboard Tuesday to monitor a measles outbreak that has infected at least 57 people in 2026. With 51 cases occurring outside New York City, health officials are urging residents to check their immunization status. State Law requires vaccinations for students, though the department recently defied a presidential executive order regarding split vaccine doses (*The Hill*).

CALIFORNIA: San Diego County warned doctors at the Otay Mesa Detention Center that continued weeks-long delays in reporting suspected tuberculosis cases "may subject health care providers to professional licensing actions." The letter, dated 9/15/2026 and signed by Dr. Sayone Thihalolipavan, the county's public health officer, cites a three-week notification delay for a suspected TB case. Though the patient began treatment Aug. 5, the county public health department did not receive a report on the suspected case until Aug. 27 (*The San Diego Union-Tribune*).

AMERICA: Air sampling at four US airports in 2023 and 2024 detected SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, in over 98% of samples and influenza A in over 17%, according to a study published in PLOS Global Public Health. Researchers from the CDC led the study, which involved air monitoring in congregate areas at San Francisco International Airport, Newark Liberty International Airport, Washington Dulles International Airport, and Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport (*CIDRAP*).

AMERICA: A few days after contracting the flu, muscle aches fade, exhaustion

lifts, and the cough starts to lose its appeal. A return to ordinary life feels overdue. But according to a study published last week in the American Journal of Epidemiology, some people diagnosed as having flu might shed the most virus RNA just as their symptoms start to improve. It's also when roughly four-fifths of study participants stopped isolating and started interacting with the broader community (*CIDRAP*).

THE WORLD: Although mpox cases related to the 2022 global outbreak were diagnosed in people who had traveled aboard, the virus now is spreading continuously in the United States. Persistent, low levels of mpox "suggest a likely transition toward endemic circulation," according to the CDC (*Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*).

AMERICA: A major produce lobby group asked US health officials to change how they communicate about a parasite outbreak that's sickened thousands, citing battered consumer confidence and sagging sales of fruit and vegetables. The International Fresh Produce Association asked the CDC and the FDA to be more precise about which foods are unsafe to eat and urge Americans to keep eating fresh fruits and vegetables (*Bloomberg*).

CAPITOL HILL: Lawmakers are set to leave Capitol Hill this week and hit the campaign trail in full force ahead of the November midterm elections, but Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) may be bringing a COVID-19 diagnosis to Florida where she is to campaign for Democrats. In an interview Rep. Ocasio-Cortez said she is currently battling COVID-19 and sporting a mask (*The Floridan Press*).

CONGO: The Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has spread to a seventh province as cases rise to 6,843, including 3,310 deaths. The newly affected province is in the northwestern DRC, on the border with the Central African Republic and Congo-Brazzaville. A male Ebola patient who became ill in Tshopo province died in Sud-Ubangi after traveling through Rwanda and Uganda and across several provinces, some of them which have not reported cases (*CIDRAP*).

And Now, Unfortunately, There Are There Are Four

Pennsylvania officials have reported a fourth measles-associated death, two adults and two infants.

The latest death involved an 18-year-old resident of Mifflin County, in the center of the state.

The cause was acute disseminated encephalomyelitis, a rare and severe neurological complication of measles.

None of the four were vaccinated, according to the state health department, although the infants were too young for vaccinations.

The U.S. is enduring its worst year for measles since 1991 and has seen seven reported measles-associated deaths in the last 2 years -- more than the combined total of reported deaths over the previous three decades.

MedPage Today, 09/15/2026

AGs Ask Other AGs to Probe Out-State SNFs

Disability Rights Nebraska asked the state's attorney General's Medicaid Fraud and Patient Abuse Unit to investigate three out-of-state corporations operating more than 20 long-term care facilities in the state.

The request comes as attorneys general can increasingly draw on public nursing home data to identify potential patterns that extend beyond a single facility or state.

An investigation in one state could also prompt officials or advocates elsewhere to examine whether similar conduct exists elsewhere within the same organization.

This particular action points to the conduct of three operators who also run facilities outside of Nebraska.

McKnight's, 09/15/2026

CareTrust Spends \$400M Adds 2600 More Beds

CareTrust REIT has acquired about \$400 million worth of skilled nursing facilities in the Southwest adding 2,622 licensed beds to its holdings.

CareTrust said it is renting the buildings back to the existing operator under a long-term, triple-net lease with annual inflation-based rent escalators.

CareTrust added that the deal was completed through a joint venture, though the real estate investment trust contributed the bulk of the cash at about \$380 million.

The purchase was effective Sept. 1.

McKnight's, 09/15/2026

Kennedy Returns to Roots But Dampens Rhetoric

Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. returned yesterday to the anti-vaccine group he founded, using a keynote address to signal the Trump administration isn't done questioning the safety of routine shots and expanding carveouts to federal mandates.

Though Kennedy avoided some of his most politically incendiary rhetoric, the speech made clear that HHS is working hard behind the scenes to continue reshaping federal vaccine policy.

He again questioned the safety of routine childhood vaccines and asserted they play a role in the development of chronic illnesses - questions that ignore decades of science supporting the vaccines' safety.

Axios, 09/18/2026

Georgia Lab Execs Charged For False M'care Claims

The DOJ filed a complaint against laboratory executives Jay Johnson and Austin Whiles, alleging that they used their roles at clinical laboratory, Capstone Diagnostics, to orchestrate testing schemes -- targeting senior citizens -- that caused Medicare to pay millions of dollars for testing generated through unlawful kickbacks.

Johnson and Whiles allegedly exploited senior living communities' demand for COVID-19 testing to generate larger reimbursing respiratory pathogen panels through community-and-chain-wide standing orders, copied or altered physician signatures, standardized diagnosis codes, and order entry by sales personnel rather than treating providers.

DOJ news release, 09/17/2026

ONE COLUMN

Guardianship – the Need is There, the Guardians Are Not

A shortage of guardians, or those empowered to make medical decisions on behalf of incapacitated patients, is contributing to a hospital bottleneck in Massachusetts. That's only one state, but the problem is likely to manifest itself in most other states.

Massachusetts estimates there are between 3,100 and 4,950 unrepresented patients who could require public guardianship services annually. And services could cost on average \$10,000 to \$11,000 per client annually.

Hospital discharges to nursing homes slows considerably when patients can't make decisions for themselves and lack a surrogate decision maker, guardian or advance directive.

Separately, Gov. Healy's Health Care Affordability Work Group placed scrutiny on transitions of care and included recommendations that would move more than 2,000 patients along that are stuck in hospitals.

Unrepresented patients are at risk of inappropriate medical care like overtreatment or undertreatment, or delayed discharges from the hospital to a different setting.

These patients are oftentimes homeless or are dealing with a serious mental illness and lack a willing or appropriate surrogate or have outlived their loved ones and friends.

The Massachusetts department of Health said compensation for guardians in the state is "inadequate or nonexistent," which drives the guardianship shortage.

Guardians of Medicaid members in nursing facilities earn about \$50 an hour with annual payments capped at \$1200.

Advocates say payments were established in 1999 and need to be increased for inflation. And, they say, payments are a "bureaucratic nightmare" to secure.

Courts end up contacting four to 13 guardians before finding someone willing to take on the responsibility.

WBUR, NPR, 09/10/2026

RN Charged for Removing O₂ from Dying Veteran

A former registered nurse at the Tomah (Wisconsin) Veterans Affairs Medical Center faces a felony charge after prosecutors say she intentionally removed oxygen from a dying hospice patient.

Beth Marie Holtz, 53, was charged with intentionally abusing a 75-year-old patient causing great bodily harm.

A staff member reported concerns of patient abuse to VA police after Holtz removed the patient's oxygen supply and prevented a certified nursing assistant from reapplying it, according to the criminal complaint.

The alleged incident occurred Aug. 17, 2025; the patient died on Aug. 23.

Holtz faces a maximum 15 years in prison, and a \$50,000 fine

WKBT-TV, 09/10/2026

Billion Dollar Genesis Deal Nears Climax

Genesis HealthCare has cleared a final, major hurdle on its path to exiting bankruptcy, with the federal judge overseeing the 16-month-long case calling it a "watershed" moment.

Attorneys for Genesis HealthCare – once one of the nation's largest – said a \$581 million settlement reached Tuesday smooths the way for Genesis' sale to NewGen Health within two weeks.

With the settlement finalized and just a few loose ends to wrap up, Genesis Attorney Dan Simon told the judge he expects to return to court next month and confirm deal completion.

NewGen bid \$996 to own Genesis and its nearly 300 facilities.

McKnight's, 09/14/2026

States Can't Get COVID Shots for Kids

States provide free vaccines to children through the Vaccines for Children program, which covers about half of the country's youths, and to uninsured or underinsured adults through a separate government program.

However, states are facing delays in obtaining COVID-19 vaccines for children through that program.

An HHS spokesperson said COVID-19 does not follow the same predictable seasonal pattern as influenza and other respiratory viruses, and that an arbitrary September date should not be treated as a public health deadline for vaccine procurement.

For now, the agency has not started accepting orders for COVID-19 shots.

The Wall Street Journal, 09/16/2026

MA Plan Coming to A Walmart Near You

Walmart Inc. and nonprofit insurer Scan Health Plan are partnering to sell Medicare Advantage plans to seniors, betting that they can use the big-box retailer's data to push down the cost of healthcare.

Prices for medical care have risen steeply in recent years, making it more difficult for health insurers to profit by selling Medicare Advantage plans, which are a private version of Medicare.

Insurers have been pulling back and closing some plans, forcing millions of people to find other coverage. Scan hopes their plan may help fill some of that gap.

Bloomberg, 09/16/2026

End of Life Advanced Care Planning Still Are Questions

Fresh consideration of advanced care planning as a component of the federal nursing home quality reporting program has been largely overlooked amid broader data changes announced in recent weeks.

The skilled nursing pay rule finalized last month included feedback on an April request for information regarding documentation of end-of-life wishes as a new barometer of performance.

The newest CMS push didn't outline methodology, but rather asked stakeholders to weigh in on "importance, relevance, appropriateness and applicability" of quality measure concepts that could capture advanced care planning.

McKnight's, 09/18/2026

Briefly in the News

The Trump administration is cracking down further on durable medical equipment (DME) suppliers as part of its broader push to root out fraud. CMS said it has identified 11 medical supply companies that it will block from receiving payments under Medicare Advantage or Medicare Part D. The agency said it suspects these firms were involved in more than \$3.4 billion in fraudulent billing practices in 2025 and 2026 (**Fierce Healthcare**).

The administration has filled four senior positions at the FDA promoting several officials who had been serving in acting roles. Michael Davis, MD, PhD, was named to lead the agency's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research, the agency's largest center responsible for the safety and effectiveness of prescription and over-the-counter drugs. He'd been serving in an acting role since the departure of Tracy Beth Høeg, MD, PhD, who said she was fired from the job in May (**MedPage Today**).

A woman is suing a South Carolina hospital for allegedly failing to tell her about a lung nodule discovered incidentally on a cardiac scan. By the time the error was caught, the woman's cancer had metastasized and her diagnosis was terminal, according to the suit (**Live 5 News**).

Scientists have discovered that the three-dimensional shape of DNA inside brain cells is disrupted in Alzheimer's disease, uncovering a previously hidden layer of the illness that could point researchers toward new treatments. Researchers at Carnegie Mellon University, the University of Pittsburgh and the University of Washington found that the way the genome folds differs in certain brain cells from people with Alzheimer's, changing which genes are switched on and off (**Newsweek**).

Women increasingly turning to testosterone therapy to manage menopause symptoms are running into unexpected prescription delays and denials at pharmacies. There is no U.S.-approved testosterone product for women, although its off-label use is on the rise, primarily to treat persistently low sexual desire related to menopause (**Reuters**).