

IN THE NEWS

News for LTC Professionals
in 100 Words-or-Less

Edited by Drew Vogel

drewvogel5255@msn.com

Vol 8

07/28/2024

THEY SAID IT:

"They're trying an end run around here to privatize all of those beds for corporate profits" State Sen. Mike Caputo on the announced privatization of West Virginia's four veterans homes

"Vaccines save lives. Success in vaccine uptake requires a coordinated effort between providers, residents, staff, communities, and the government" Linda Couch, senior vice president of policy and advocacy at LeadingAge at White house summit

"We need to see how this could have happened" Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic after a gunman killed six elderly people including his own mother in a Croatian nursing home

I suspect all other healthcare matters will be side burner issues until the reproductive and maternal health debates are settled" Brian Perry, vice president of government affairs at Direct Supply on a Harris presidency

Prosecutor Wanted Prison Time Bob Dean Got Probation

Bob Dean pleaded "no contest" to 15 criminal charges Monday - charges stemming from the evacuation of residents of seven of Dean's former nursing homes during 2021's Hurricane Ida.

Nearly 850 residents were brought to his warehouse that wasn't equipped to handle it. Several people died.

Dean's 20-year prison sentence was deferred. Instead, he'll serve three years of probation.

Judge Brian Ables said Dean's age, no criminal history, and requirement to pay more than \$1 million in fines and court costs were factors in the sentencing of three years' probation.

WWL-TV, 07/22/2024

Kamala Harris' Healthcare Policy Positions

When Joe Biden dropped out of the presidential race last weekend, he endorsed Vice-President Kamala Harris. What could we expect from a Harris presidency?

In April, Ms. Harris announced two final rules that set minimum staffing requirements for long-term care facilities, and require facilities to have an RN on site 24/7.

Vice-President Harris has advocated for student loan debt forgiveness for various sectors including healthcare.

In 2017, she became one of the first prominent Democrats to back Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders' "Medicare-for-all" bill.

If she is chosen, reproductive health rights are likely to be a cornerstone of her campaign.

Becker's Hospital Review, 07/22/2024

Harris, the Dems' Platform And Nursing Home Issues

If Kamala Harris becomes the Democratic Party's nominee she's likely to follow in President Biden's footsteps in trying to tamp down private equity investments in healthcare, promote policies and rules that bring more transparency to ownership.

She will also likely try to thwart healthcare consolidation as she did as AG in California.

Regarding the nursing home staffing mandate, party officials continue to bolster the push for improvements. Last week, a key party committee agreed to an amendment making nursing home staffing standards a convention platform, regardless of the candidate who prevails.

McKnight's, 07/22/2024

Plan to Privatize WVA Vets Homes Gets Push-back

The planned privatization West Virginia's four long term care facilities appalled members of at least one county's legislative delegation.

The Department of Health Facilities issued a release last week announcing it is working with Lument Securities, a New York City-based firm, an advisor in health care mergers and acquisitions.

"I think it's a horrible, horrible idea to privatize an institution that works so well," said state Sen. Mike Caputo of Marion County, location of one of the veterans homes

The sales can be blocked legislatively in January regular legislative session, or in a planned upcoming special session.

Times West Virginian, 07/19/2024

Study: Staffing Mandate Would Save 13,000 Lives a Year

Researchers from the University of Pennsylvania, in a study commissioned by Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren, estimated this week the nursing home staffing mandate could save nearly 13,000 lives each year.

The researchers examined PBJ data from CMS and research on the link between minimum staffing and nursing home mortality rates in California.

Extrapolating the mortality decreases observed in that California study, the researchers estimated that 12,945 lives would be saved nationally each year by bringing nursing home staffing up to staffing mandate levels.

McKnight's, 07/22/2024

More Staff = Better Care? It Ain't that Simple

Staffing levels have long been linked to quality of care — a fact that has contributed to the mandating minimum levels of staffing in nursing homes. But a JAMDA study indicates it's not that simple. Care being provided by RNs, LPNs or CNAs may yield not only different, but opposite results.

Higher numbers of RNs in nursing homes, for example, was linked to fewer hospitalizations, ER visits and pressure sores — but it also marked increased use of antipsychotic drugs.

More CNAs, meanwhile, were linked to more hospitalizations but produced better results when measuring activities of daily life and antipsychotic drug use.

McKnight's, 07/18/2024

IN THE TRENCHES – COVID-19 in the States, the SNFs, the World

AMERICA: COVID is going around again this summer, with infections rising across the country. The good news is that the most common variants circulating in the country — KP.3, KP.2, and LB.1 — cause similar symptoms to previous COVID strains, such as cough, fever and fatigue. And many people can recover at home. The bad news: These variants have a mutation that make them more contagious (*Miami Herald*).

THE WORLD: The intense scientific effort that long COVID sparked has resulted in more than 24,000 scientific publications, making it the most researched health condition in any four years of recorded human history (*Fast Company*).

THE PHILLIPINES: The Chinese embassy in the Philippines said on Monday the United States should give an explanation to the Filipino people as soon as possible for its false propaganda against China's COVID-19 vaccine. The remarks centered around a Reuters investigative report that said the U.S. military launched a clandestine program during the COVID pandemic to discredit China's Sinovac inoculation in the Philippines (*Reuters*).

NEW YORK CITY: Former President Donald Trump has accused President Biden of faking his COVID diagnosis ahead of his historic decision to drop out of the election. "Biden never had Covid. He is a threat to Democracy!" the Republican presidential nominee posted to Truth Social (*New York Post*).

AMERICA: A Boston Children's Hospital-led study reveals that COVID-19 vaccine uptake lagged among US children with more social vulnerability, lower socioeconomic status and greater household composition and disability as of July 2022. The study, also identified longer travel times to vaccination sites for rural, uninsured, White, and Native American families (*Pediatrics*).

SCANDINAVIA: A study adds to the growing body of literature demonstrating the safety of COVID-19 vaccine use in pregnant women. The study showed no

connection between COVID vaccination or infection in the first trimester of pregnancy and congenital birth defects. The study is based on outcomes seen among 343,066 live-born single infants in Sweden, Denmark, and Norway with an estimated first trimester of pregnancy occurring from March 1, 2020, to February 14, 2022 (*BMJ*).

SCOTLAND: A recent rise in cases of coronavirus in Scotland may have "peaked." Dr Kimberly Marsh, a consultant healthcare scientist at Public Health Scotland (PHS), said the virus did not appear to follow seasonal illness patterns, such as flu. The latest data from PHS, for the week ending 14 July, had the number of cases in Scotland at 1,130, a drop from the previous week's total of 1,245 (*BBC*).

THE WORLD: In 2020, when the ancestral strain of SARS-CoV-2 was dominant and vaccines were not available, about 10.4% of adults who got COVID-19 developed long COVID. By early 2022, when the omicron family of variants predominated, that rate declined to 7.7% among unvaccinated adults and 3.5% of vaccinated adults (*Fast Company*).

AMERICA: More than four years after COVID hit eighth graders remain a full school year behind pre-pandemic levels in math and reading, according to new test results encompassing over 7.7 million students. The 2023-24 results reflect the last tests administered before federal COVID relief funds run out (*The 74*).

THE WORLD: Visits for symptoms associated with long COVID make up a moderate burden of primary care visits and are marked by recurring symptoms including breathing problems and sleep disturbances. Overall, 28,215 COVID-19 patients were compared to 235,953 historical control patients with influenza-like illness. COVID-19 patients had higher prevalences of breathing difficulties (4.2% vs 1.9%), type 2 diabetes (12.0% vs 10.2%), fatigue (3.9% vs 2.2%), and sleep disturbances (3.5% vs 2.4%), compared to ILI patients (*Annals of Family Medicine*).

AMERICA: A severe shortage of teachers is being called a legacy of COVID-19. Teachers were already unhappy before the pandemic, but the public's reaction to the education their kids got during that crisis continues to haunt the profession. A Brown University study found teachers' job satisfaction in 2022 hovered near its lowest level since the 1970s (*The Conversation*).

INDIA: In a survey of 765,180 people in India, COVID-19 dealt an outsized blow to India during the first year of the pandemic. The study, led by researchers from the University of Oxford and the Research Institute for Compassionate Economics in Connecticut, estimates a 2.6-year lower life expectancy at birth and a 17% higher death rate, with the greatest losses among females, the youngest and oldest people, and marginalized groups (*Science Advances*).

AMERICA: A study suggests that an initial disbelief in the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to vaccine hesitancy among Hispanic people in the United States, especially among parents making vaccine decisions for their children. Vaccine hesitancy is usually linked to safety concerns, but this study proposes that those concerns are not the total picture (*PLOS One*).

AMERICA: A fact sheet published by the CDC during the week highlighted a 20% rise in hospital-onset infections caused by antimicrobial-resistant pathogens and a fivefold increase in *Candida auris* infections during the COVID-19 pandemic compared with 2019. A Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America (SHEA) **statement** following the release of the fact sheet calls for continued investment in CDC programs that fight antimicrobial resistance (*CIDRAP*).

COVID-19, 07/26/2024

Global Cases – Deaths
775,763,955 – 7,053,524

U.S. Cases – Deaths
103,436,829 – 1,190,579

WHO

White House Hosts Summit To Promote Vaccines

Nursing homes were in-focus at a White House summit last week as individual providers from North Carolina, Minnesota, New Jersey and LTC leaders were invited by the Biden administration to present their strategies for and experiences with promoting vaccination acceptance.

Prominent senior care organizations and government agencies also joined the session.

The new HHS campaign — “Risk Less, Do More” — was revealed by HHS Assistant Secretary Jeff Nesbit at the summit with plans to roll out digital and print educational materials, social media ads and pop-up clinics this fall.

McKnight's, 07/19/2024

Gunman Kills Six in Croatian Nursing Home

An armed man entered a nursing home in a quiet central Croatian town Monday and opened fire, killing six people — five residents including his mother — and wounding six others.

The victims were mostly in their 90s.

Regional television reported the shooter was born in 1973 and is a former policeman who took part in the 1991-95 war in Croatia.

The suspect fled the scene, but the police caught him in a cafe near the facility in the town of Daruvar.

CBS News, 07/22/2024

Payroll Violations - Bankrupt SNFs Hit with \$35M Fine

A judge has slapped 15 nursing homes with a \$35.8 million judgment after finding Comprehensive Healthcare Management Services and part owner Samuel Halper “routinely” and willingly failed to properly compensate workers over a six-year period.

The DOL estimated employees in departments ranging from nursing to social work to housekeeping had been illegally denied some \$17.9 million in pay.

Comprehensive was to sell seven of the homes to Kadima Healthcare, which like Comprehensive, is partly owned by Ephram “Mordy” Lahasky.

The government said owners were trying to divert resources that could be tied to a future claim.

McKnight's, 07/24/2024

Pay Problems – AG Places Three SNFs in Receivership

Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Campbell announced the receivership order Monday following a ruling in Suffolk Superior Court.

Staff at the three facilities — all operated by Blupoint Healthcare — raised the alarm earlier this month when they picketed to protest inconsistent payroll that they claim left some workers without pay for weeks.

Those facilities are Whitinsville’s Blackstone Valley Health, Amesbury’s Mill Town Health and Rehabilitation and South Hadley’s Pioneer Valley Health and Rehabilitation.

McKnight's, 07/25/2024

Review Your Compliance With Infection Control Regs

Social worker Mary Lovejoy Castaneda resigned from her position at Iowa-based provider Care Initiatives in May.

She cited concerns about poor implementation of IPC policies and also personal discomfort with hospice patients being assigned to her despite assurances during the hiring process that this would not happen.

Care Initiatives appealed Castaneda’s application for unemployment benefits, but an administrative judge ruled in her favor.

McKnight's, 07/19/2024

Lower SNF Use Could Be “New Normal”

Medicare fee-for-service use in skilled nursing stayed stable between the end of 2022 and the end of 2023 but still hasn’t returned to pre-COVID levels.

The Trella Health analysis noted that this could indicate a “new normal” for skilled nursing.

McKnight's, 07/22/2024

ONE COLUMN

AARP’s Vision for a National Plan on Aging

By 2030, one in five Americans will be age 65 or older. This trend is potentially transformational for the economy, culture, and society in the U.S., as it is for other nations where the same trend is playing out.

While other countries are responding to these changes by developing and implementing national strategic plans to help them meet the challenges and maximize opportunities to increase longevity, the U.S. has yet to develop a comprehensive national plan on aging. Importantly, aging itself is not a challenge; being unprepared for aging is.

A national plan on aging is essential to ensuring that as Americans age, they are able to build financial resilience, maintain good health, and remain in their homes and communities. For many older Americans, these goals are out of reach.

A national plan on aging must offer a clear and compelling vision and articulate clear actions for sustained, equitable impact. AARP’s vision for aging well is an inclusive society where all individuals can age with dignity and purpose—maintaining their health, financial resilience, and quality of life in age-friendly, livable communities with the necessary support systems in place.

Below are four key goals that should guide the development of a national aging plan:

Goal 1: Promote healthy living and access to affordable, high-quality health care.

Goal 2: Support family caregivers and ensure access to affordable, high-quality long-term services and supports (LTSS) that maximizes the dignity, independence, and protection of older adults

Goal 3: Provide ample opportunities to generate, save, and preserve financial resources.

Goal 4: Create age-friendly, livable communities that enable people to age in place, and continue as engaged members of their communities.

AARP, 07/16/2024

State's Largest Nursing Home is Closing

Montana's largest nursing home plans to close its doors weeks after being terminated from the federal Medicare and Medicaid program.

In a recent public notice, CMS announced its relationship with the 278-bed Ivy At Great Falls would end effective July 9, due to "a history of serious quality issues."

The facility will not be paid for any resident admitted after July 9 and reimbursements for current residents end August 9.

So far about 65 patients, 61% of the facility's latest census, have been moved to new facilities or have been accepted and are awaiting transfer.

Montana Free Press, 07/18/2024

PA Budgets Funds Will Help SNFs and Seniors

Pennsylvania's 2024-25 budget contains funding to help ensure Pennsylvania seniors are able to live out their golden years with dignity by investing including \$75 million in increased funding for the care of seniors and adults with disabilities living in skilled nursing facilities.

Nursing homes will receive a 7.04% annualized rate increase that will support facility staffing and quality of care.

The budget also contains 2.95 million to support PDA's implementation of *Aging Our Way, PA* and 1.9 million to create an Alzheimer's Disease division within the state's Department of Aging.

PA.gov, 07/11/2024

U.S. News Picks Top Medical Schools

U.S. News & World Report has released its annual medical school rankings and ratings, producing two separately lists, one for research and one for primary care.

The top three medical schools for research are Baylor College of Medicine (Houston), Case Western Reserve University (Cleveland) and Emory University (Atlanta).

At the top for primary care are East Carolina University (Greenville, N.C.), Saint Louis University, and Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (Lubbock).

Ultimately, there were 102 medical and osteopathic schools with eligible data for this year's research-oriented computation, and 99 for the primary care computation.

Becker's Hospital Review, 07/23/2024

Gov. Says 'No' Again to Upping Ombudsman Budget

Missouri Gov. Mike Parson has vetoed a funding increase the state's ombudsman program.

Missouri's long-term care ombudsman program organizes workers and volunteers to advocate for and educate residents at the state's hundreds of nursing homes and skilled nursing facilities.

For the second time in two years, Parson has vetoed multimillion-dollar funding increases that would support a program advocates say safeguards nursing home residents.

Parson also vetoed a similar bill in 2023.

St. Louis Public Radio, 07/19/2024

Ombudsman Program's Probs Same as LTC - Staff & Money

Many of the same problems facing LTC operators have also increasingly arisen as issues for states' ombudsman programs.

With resources scarce and demands on those limited resources only increasing, state ombudsman programs told the GAO that they are struggling to meet the needs of the residents they are designed to advocate for.

The presence of an ombudsman at a nursing home's annual survey has been linked to increased likelihood of deficiencies in surveys.

The publication of this GAO report signals government concern about these ongoing challenges, but it is unclear what steps may be taken to remedy them.

McKnight's, 05/24/2024

Briefly in the News

Republican leaders of the House Homeland Security Committee are calling on cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike's CEO, George Kurtz, to appear on Capitol Hill regarding the July 19 global IT outage that affected healthcare organizations across the country. On July 19, Mr. Kurtz confirmed that a faulty content update the company released for Windows users prompted outages across various industries, including healthcare, banking and airlines (*The Washington Post*).

In a sample of 2437 patients with gunshot wounds black patients were more likely to discharge to home with home health (64.1% black versus 34.7% white). White patients were more likely to discharge to skilled nursing facility (SNF) (51.4% white versus 44.6% black (*Duke University study*)).

Officials say the \$224 million net erected to deter suicides at the Golden Gate Bridge may also be deterring people from jumping in the first place. So far this year, staff successfully intervened in 56 attempted jumps, when at this point in a typical year, officials say they would have expected to see up to 100 already. "The net is working," said Paolo Cosulich-Schwartz, director of public affairs for the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District (*San Francisco Chronicle*).

After a rare neurological disorder robbed her of her ability to speak clearly, Jennifer Wexton has been given her voice back with the help of a powerful artificial intelligence program, allowing the Virginia Democrat to make a clone of her speaking voice using old recordings of speeches she made as a congresswoman. She used that program to deliver what is believed to be the first speech on the House floor ever given via a voice cloned by artificial intelligence (*AP*).

WHO issued a medical product alert on falsified medicines that are used for treatment of type 2 diabetes and obesity. The alert addresses 3 falsified batches of Ozempic, in the U.S. last December and three other countries. It's the first official WHO notice for Ozempic, but it has received increased reports on falsified semaglutide products in all geographical regions since 2022 (*WHO*).