

# IN THE NEWS

News for LTC Professionals  
in 100 Words-or-Less

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## THEY SAID IT

**"A report commissioned by CMS itself found that there is no single staffing level that guarantees quality care, and a mandated ratio will force facilities to turn away patients or close their doors altogether"** Minnesota Congresswoman Michelle Fishbach to prohibit HHS from implementing the Biden Administration's minimum staffing rule

**"I'm no longer going to let them stick me with a needle"** Jessica Farren of Attleboro, MA who was vaccinated but nevertheless got COVID – her husband and 2-year-old daughter won't get jabbed either

**"The manufacturers who use eggs to produce influenza vaccine control very, very carefully the supply of eggs and the hens that produce them"** William Schaffner, MD, professor of infectious diseases at Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

## **She's 104-Years-Old And She Went to Jail**

Loretta, a resident at Avon Nursing & Rehabilitation, in upstate New York, had one wish for her 104th birthday:

She wanted to go to jail.

The Livingston County Sheriff's Office obliged.

Two days after her birthday Loretta was given a tour of Livingston County Jail.

She started off the tour with coffee and cake, a treat not usually given to inmates.

When Loretta was born in 1921, and lived through WWII, a man on the moon, Color TV, 9/11 and the COVID-19 pandemic

Asked what the secret is for a long life she said it's "Minding your own business."

WLBTV, 02/18/2025

## **House Passes Budget Medicaid Cuts Still Possible**

House Republicans passed a budget bill Tuesday that is the first step toward extending President Trump's tax cuts and reducing spending on Medicaid.

But Republicans nearly failed, and the two hours of messiness that led to its passage is an early sign of how difficult it will be to enact Trump's agenda.

Republican leadership initially canceled the vote on the budget resolution after more than an hour of trying to convince GOP holdouts to switch their votes.

About 10 minutes later, leadership called for a second vote.

The bill passed the second time 217 to 215.

Stat, 02/25/2025

## **Trump's Own Supporters Opposed to Medicaid Cuts**

A poll released Monday found most of President Trump voters say they oppose any cuts to Medicaid.

Republican lawmakers are currently wrestling with how to reach up to \$2 trillion (with a "T") in budget cuts through their reconciliation bill.

The poll from Hart Research conducted for the nonprofit Families Over Billionaires, which advocates in opposition to "tax cuts for the wealthy," found 71% of voters who backed Trump said cutting Medicaid would be unacceptable.

Voters overall were even more opposed to it, with 82% saying no to cutting Medicaid.

The Hill, 02/25/2025

## **3 Charged with Kidnapping Nursing Home Resident**

A 60-year-old man was kidnapped from Novato Healthcare Center, in Marin County north of San Francisco by group of people he knows,

Police said the suspects tried to fraudulently obtain conservators Novato Healthcare Center hip for financial gain by kidnapping the victim.

The suspects fled in a Honda CR-V, but Marin County sheriff's deputies spotted the vehicle on Highway 101 in Sausalito and pulled it over.

The victim was found inside and taken to a hospital as a precaution.

KTVU-TV, 02/19/2025

## **Fired FDA Employees Are Hired Back**

Trump administration has started quietly rehiring some of the FDA employees it fired last week shortly after letting them go in a process that insiders described as abrupt and haphazard.

The total number of employees rehired is unclear, but in at least some cases the reinstatements appeared to be broad.

Meanwhile, a pair of Democratic senators are raising concerns that the firings could affect drug and device approvals and food safety efforts.

Stat and Roll Call, 02/21/2025

## **Policeman Killed by Shooter In Pennsylvania Hospital**

A man armed with a pistol and carrying zip ties entered a York, Pennsylvania hospital's intensive care unit a week ago and took staff members hostage before he was killed by police in a shootout that also left an officer dead.

Three workers at UPMC Memorial Hospital, including a doctor, a nurse and a custodian, and two other officers were shot and wounded in the attack.

The shooter was identified as identified as Diogenes Archangel-Ortiz, 49, who police said had contact with the hospital earlier in the week.

Health care is one of the nation's most violent fields.

AP, 02/22/2025

**Free!**  
**COVID-19 Test Kits**  
**Get Them While You Can**  
**COVIDTests.gov.**

## **IN THE TRENCHES – COVID-19 & Other Outbreaks in the U.S. and the World**

**TEXAS:** A child in Texas has died from measles, the first known death in the current large outbreak in West Texas and the first death from measles in the country since 2015. The child was not vaccinated. The outbreak has now grown to 124 cases in Texas and nine in New Mexico (*Stat*).

**TEXAS:** As the measles outbreak in Texas keeps spreading, parents who previously chose not to vaccinate their children are now lining up to get their kids the shots needed to protect them from the serious illness. "We've vaccinated multiple kids that have never been vaccinated before, some from families that didn't believe in vaccines," said Katherine Wells, director of public health for Lubbock's health department (*NBC News*).

**AMERICA:** US flu activity ebbed a bit but remained high and above the baseline for the 12th straight week. There were more than 43,000 hospitalizations and 18 deaths, all of them children. COVID-19 levels are generally low but there are elevated levels in many parts of the country. Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) cases are at moderate levels and declining. peak for COVID-related hospital demand was lower this season than all previous seasons and nearly 50% lower than last season's peak (*CDC*).

**WASHINGTON, D.C:** HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is planning to remove several members of CDC's vaccine advisory committee due to what he sees as conflicts of interest. Kennedy has previously said that he is concerned about the drug industry's relationship with regulators. The process of reviewing committee members has just started, and there is no firm timeline for the removals, nor is it known how many people will be removed (*Politico*).

**IRELAND:** Health Service Executive (HSE) said an Irish resident has contracted the country's first case of clade 1 mpox. The person had recently traveled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where clade 1b mpox was first noted in 2024 is currently circulating in the community at high levels (*CIDRAP*).

**AMERICA:** Public health officials are looking into reports of a small potential uptick in neurologic complications of influenza in children -- particularly a rapidly progressing and dangerous condition called acute necrotizing encephalopathy (ANE). Adrienne Randolph, MD, MSc, of Boston Children's Hospital, said she reported about 12 potential cases of flu-associated ANE to CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases in the past few weeks (*MedPage Today*).

**WASHINGTON, D.C:** In an executive order President Donald Trump has terminated two advisory committees within HHS, one on long COVID and another on health equity at CMS. Both advisory committees were established in the Biden administration. Meetings for the long COVID advisory committee had not yet begun. The health equity advisory committee was even less established and had not yet selected its members (*Fierce Healthcare*).

**WASHINGTON, D.C:** The FDA has approved AstraZeneca's Flumist, the first nasal spray for use outside of a healthcare setting. The spray will require a prescription. The drugmaker is planning to start a website where people can get questions answered and have those answers reviewed by a pharmacist before FluMNist is shipped to their house (*WMAQ-TV*).

growing outbreak of bird flu that has sent the price of eggs soaring nationwide. Technicians at the California Animal Health and Food Safety Lab at the University of California, Davis, have been sounding the alarm for months, alleging staffing shortages and strains as their union has been in contentious negotiations with the University of California system. (*Politico*).

**OHIO:** A man from Mercer County, Ohio, is that state's first human case of H5N1 avian flu, according to the Ohio Department of Health. The man is a farm worker who was in contact with deceased commercial poultry. ... Ohio is one of the epicenters of the US bird flu outbreak, with 54 outbreaks since the middle of January.

The outbreaks have led to the loss of more than 10 million birds (*CIDRAP*).

**CALIFORNIA:** More than 900 Californians - including 15 children - have died from the flu this season in what has turned out to be one of the worst surges of the respiratory illness in years. Most of the influenza victims - 701 - were over 64 years old, which tracks with the conventional notion that the illness disproportionately affects older people (*Los Angeles Times*).

**GERMANY:** In Ravensburg, Germany, some residents received letters promoting free COVID-19 shots. Those in another group received the letters and an incentive of €40 (US \$41.46) if they got vaccinated at one of the events. The effect of financial incentives on primary and booster vaccinations was nonsignificant. Researchers concluded incentives likely unnecessary for those willing to get vaccinated anyhow (*CIDRAP*).

**THE WORLD:** A study suggests that highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) virus shed in poultry droppings can be transmitted by the wind. a possibility that other experts say can't be ruled out but is also very difficult to prove. The report centers on a February 2024 outbreak of H5N1 avian flu among unrelated commercial poultry farms located about 5 miles apart in the Czech Republic (*CIDRAP*).

**WASHINGTON, D.C:** Two U.S. government agencies that are key players in the World Health Organization-led process to select the flu viruses for next winter's influenza vaccines are participating in a meeting to discuss the issue, despite the Trump administration's plans to withdraw from the global health agency (*Stat*).

### **COVID-19, 02/27/2025**

**World Total Cases**  
777,385,370

**World Total Deaths**  
7,088,757

**U.S. Total Deaths**  
1,216,819

World Health Organization

## **Nursing Home Deaths Linked to Supplements**

At least 12 deaths have been linked to cartons of frozen shakes sold to nursing homes and long-term care facilities that are being recalled after an outbreak of listeria,

The supplemental shakes are labeled under the brands Lyons ReadyCare and Sysco Imperial.

In addition to the 11 deaths, the shakes have made at least 38 people ill in 21 states, with 37 hospitalizations.

The CDC reported the outbreak includes cases dating back to 2018, but remains ongoing, with 20 cases reported in 2024 and 2025.

*CBS News, 02/22/2025*

## **Legionnaire's Infection in Ohio Nursing Home**

Legionnaire's disease has been discovered in a Troy, Ohio nursing home after a resident tested positive.

Troy is just north of Dayton, Ohio.

The administrator at Troy Rehabilitation and Healthcare Center said they're testing the facility's water.

They also brought in an independent lab group to test the water and scan for bacteria throughout the building.

If anything is found, they will disinfect their system to kill any Legionella and prevent more from growing and installed high-filtration water taps and shower heads that remove Legionella.

The resident is being treated for respiratory illness.

*WHIO-TV, 02/25/2025*

## **Accused of Retaliation vs Facility Whistleblowers**

The former administrator of a central Iowa nursing home accused of retaliating against whistleblowers and ordering staff to falsify records is now facing potential sanctions from a state licensing board.

Sammarra Smith, 55, is charged by the Board of Nursing Home Administrators

with violating retaliation and falsification regulations,

The board has not disclosed any information on the nature of the alleged violation. Smith worked as administrator at Harmony West Des Moines – a 120-bed ManorCare/Promedica facility several years ago when the alleged incidents happened.

*Iowa Capital Dispatch, 02/12/2025*

## **Iowa Chain Facing Another Whistleblower Lawsuit**

One of Iowa's largest nursing home chains – Care Initiatives with 44 facilities in Iowa – is facing its third retaliation lawsuit filed by a former nurse alleging a form of whistleblower retaliation.

In the most recent case, RN Tina Weber said she witnessed and documented an incident in which an employee caused a resident to fall from a wheelchair.

Weber charges that the DON, administrator and a Care Initiatives corporate employee separately instructed her to change the entry in the resident's record to indicate the resident "pui himself on the ground."

Sher says she was fired when she refused.

*Iowa Capital Dispatch, 02/20/2025*

## **Can't Fill 'em? Why Not Lease 'em**

Skilled nursing facilities are getting innovative while addressing the ongoing challenge of low occupancy rates by partnering with other healthcare systems such as hospitals to lease out unfilled nursing home beds.

Bed leasing has become a rising practice for many SNFs, which are securing an additional revenue stream while also helping alleviate strain from overloaded hospitals.

Companies such as Scripps Health have been at the forefront of such arrangements.

The non-profit Scripps Health system has saved nearly 15,000 bed-days since January 2023 by facilitating hospital-SNF relationships that often result in discharged patients finding secure places to next lay their head.

*Becker's Hospital Review, 02/19/2025*

## **ONE COLUMN**

### **Healthcare Billionaires – 20% Of the World's Are Americans**

The Bloomberg Billionaires Index, lists 32 people globally who are mega-rich from healthcare enterprises.

The richest person to make his fortune in healthcare is Thomas Frist, Jr., MD (\$28.8 billion) who alongside his father in the 1960s co-founded Hospital Corporation of America (HCA) Healthcare. HCA runs 186 hospitals and cares for more than 43 million patients every year.

Carl Cook, owner and CEO of Cook Group, which manufactures medical devices is the second richest healthcare American. Cook's parents founded the company in the 1960s and he became CEO in 2011 after his father died. His net worth is \$15.8 billion.

Another American, investor Bob Duggan, is next with a net worth of \$14.7 billion. Duggan sold the drugmaker Pharmacyclis for a \$3 billion profit and now is the largest shareholder in the biopharmaceutical oncology company Summit Therapeutics.

Next up is Li Xiting (net worth \$14 billion), a Chinese-born Singaporean businessman who is chairman of the Chinese medical equipment maker Shenzhen Mindray Bio-Medical Electronics.

Patrick Soon-Shiong, MD, (\$11 billion) surgeon who sold two drug companies: American Pharmaceutical Partners and Abraxis BioScience. He also invented protein-bound paclitaxel (Abraxane) for treating cancer. On the side, he owns the *Los Angeles Times* and has a 4.5% stake in the Los Angeles Lakers basketball team.

Ronda Stryker, (\$10.6 billion) the largest shareholder in Stryker, and her sister Pat Stryker (\$8.55 billion) they have huge stakes in medical equipment manufacturer that her grandfather founded in 1941.

By comparison, Elon Musk is by far the richest man in the world, with \$384 billion. Mark Zuckerberg and Jeff Bezos take spots two and three with net worths of \$255 and \$248 billion, respectively.

*MedPage Today, 02/13/2025  
Becker's Hospital Review, 02/19/2025*

## **She Went Down the Stairs in Her Wheelchair**

An Iowa nursing home is being sued by a woman who fell down a flight of concrete stairs while in a wheelchair.

Elaine Gunderson, 88, is suing Odebolt Specialty Care and its owners, Care Initiatives of West Des Moines, for negligence and breach of contract.

The lawsuit alleges that last July, Gunderson was found at the bottom of 13 concrete stairs that led from the kitchen to the basement of the home.

The kitchen is off limits to residents, but a staff member had allegedly propped open the door, allowing Gunderson to wheel herself in.

The lawsuit seeks unspecified damages.

*Iowa Capital Dispatch, 02/19/2025*

## **America's 2nd Largest SNF is Still Struggling**

San Francisco's nearly 160-year-old Laguna Honda Hospital and Rehabilitation Center was stripped of its Medicare and Medicaid certification in April 2022 after it failed to reach compliance of four standard surveys.

After gaining its recertification with of a 960-step plan —that included new leadership, training staff, updating policies, expanding resident councils and improving infrastructure — occupancy levels have yet to recover.

There are currently 435 residents in its 649 beds – down from 769 pre-pandemic – but 30% of the current beds are empty.

Laguna is currently licensed for 649 beds, significantly lower than the 769-bed level it could accommodate pre-pandemic.

*McKnight's, 02/17/2025*

## **SNF Fined for Abrupt Transfer of Residents**

The New Jersey Department of Health has fined Maple Shade nursing home Sterling Manor, \$60,000 for closing without giving the state proper notice.

The facility, facing the loss of its license due to quality-of-care and financial problems, did not give the required notice before sending patients to new facilities.

"Residents were loaded on buses on a freezing January day with their belongings in plastic bags," said Laurie Facciarossa Brewer, the state's long-term care ombudsman.

State regulations require a 60-day notice for such relocations.

*Cherry Hill Courier Post, 02/24/2025*

## **Americans Say Pandemic Drove Them Apart**

A new Pew Research Center poll shows 72% of Americans said the pandemic did more to divide the country than bring it together, with 75% saying COVID-19 took a toll on their own lives.

The poll was conducted last October with 9,593 respondents and suggests that, 5 years after the pandemic, the nation has not yet healed from the societal effects of the novel coronavirus.

Americans citing the once-in-decades event as an accelerator of the political divide between the left and the right, the distrust of government institutions, and the rise of disinformation.

*CIDRAP, 02/14/2025*

## **Welltower: Good '24; Good Start to '25**

Welltower announced \$2 billion of balance sheet investment activity through the first six weeks of 2025, marking the strongest start to a year in the REIT's history.

The news follows a "tremendous year of investment activity" last year, with the closing of \$2.2 billion in transactions in the fourth quarter, CEO Shankh Mitra said Wednesday during the company's fourth-quarter and full-year 2024 earnings call.

A strengthening senior living climate contributed to Welltower's successful 2024.

The quarter delivered same-store net operating income growth of almost 24%, which marked the ninth consecutive quarter in which the REIT's NOI growth exceeded 20%.

*Senior Living, 02/13/2025*

## **Briefly in the News**

Uncertainty over interest rates, as well as Medicaid reimbursement and immigration policy, are prompting some private equity investors to delay investments in companies that provide skilled and nonmedical care in the home. Still, advisors who help broker home care deals said the highly fragmented sector could remain a long-term sweet spot for investment as an aging population pushes more care to where patients live (***Modern Healthcare***).

A series of recently released reports show sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in Europe continued their upward trajectory in 2023. Gonorrhea cases in European Union/European Economic Area countries, for example, rose by 31% in 2023 compared with 2022 and has risen by 321% since 2014 (***CIDRAP***).

Children with a rare form of eye disorder who were born blind can now see thanks to a "remarkable" gene therapy breakthrough. Researchers from London's Moorfields Eye Hospital, biotech firm MeiraGTx and University College London have demonstrated that their therapy is both safe and effective in improving the vision of and slowing retinal deterioration in young patients. This previously untreatable genetic disorder leads to profound visual impairments and legal blindness (***Newsweek***).

Narcissists, the scheming, self-centered, much maligned and over-diagnosed personality types are not often the subject of sympathy. But a new study has cast people with narcissistic personality traits in a new light - as feeling more excluded than their peers and stuck in a behavioral doom loop from which they can't easily escape. The study shows people with narcissistic personality traits feel ostracized more often than their less self-absorbed peers (***Journal of Personality and Social Psychology***).

The Department of Veterans Affairs on Monday fired another 1,400 employees amid an outcry over a lack of transparency from the agency after 1,000 workers were axed earlier this month. The VA said the individuals dismissed were "non-mission critical" probationary employees who have served less than two years (***The Hill***).