

IN THE NEWS

News for LTC Professionals
in 100 Words-or-Less

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THEY SAID IT

"Even though it's an uphill battle, this is something that still needs to be handled and we're going to shame the hell out of people until they start introducing some of this stuff"

Iowa state senator Claire Celsi who introduced 14 nursing homes bills this session

"In 2021, we spent about \$3.1 million on contract nursing," he said. "By 2024, the last full fiscal year we have, it was almost \$7 million" West Virginia VA Sec. Ryan Kennedy on the cost of nurses at the facility in Clarksburg

"Absent congressional action, new Medicare Part D drug pricing policies will soon jeopardize the ability of many LTC pharmacies to maintain operations" SCPC President and CEO Alan Rosenbloom

PointClickCare has Lost a Battle, But Not the War - Yet

A federal court continues to prevent PointClickCare from blocking a smaller data analytics firm from its platform. A three-judge panel has rejected an appeal in the case against PCC.

Real Time Medical Systems sued last year, accusing PCC of using unsolvable puzzles known as CAPTCHAs to keep it from accessing patient records on behalf of Real Time's skilled nursing customers.

The Circuit Court judges agreed with that allegation, finding that the "public interest does not weigh in favor of such anticompetitive and harmful behavior."

PCC's appeal was rejected. The court case now continues but no upcoming hearings have been scheduled.

McKnight's, 03/13/2025

Bill Would Ban Sale of SNFs to PE or REITs

Connecticut lawmakers have proposed a new bill that would ban private equity investors and REITs from acquiring any stake in nursing homes.

Several states have taken recent action to increase oversight in healthcare deals involving private equity. But if passed, the Connecticut legislation could be the first to prevent private equity firms from investing in a specific sector.

The downside is that should the bill become law, struggling operators would have fewer sale options and could lead to facilities closing.

The federal government estimates that private equity investors had an ownership role in just 5% of nursing homes in 2022.

McKnight's, 03/06/2025

60% of LTC Pharmacies Warn of Closure

Facing deep losses on high-demand medications, 85% of long-term care pharmacies say they will limit essential services and 60% will close locations without changes to Medicare drug pricing efforts.

Those are among the "unintended consequences" revealed in a Senior Care Pharmacy Coalition survey just released. The trade association has been increasingly vocal about pricing changes set to go into effect in January.

Eight of 10 listed drugs are heavily relied upon by long-term care patients, and pharmacies traditionally relied on their higher prices to offset the wide-scale delivery of low-priced generic medications in nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

McKnight's, 03/13/2025

LTC Has Bounced Back From Pitiful Pandemic Low

The residential long-term care market — including independent living, assisted living, memory care and continuing care retirement communities, as well as skilled nursing

facilities — experienced strong recovery 2024, and investors and lenders are "cautiously optimistic" for the year ahead,

Occupancy rates, rental rates and operations increased in long-term care, with many communities returning to pre-pandemic levels in 2024.

In fact the report from Newmark claims the long-term care market now has "more units occupied than at any point in history, as new communities which came online during the pandemic have generally experienced strong lease-ups."

Senior Living, 03/10/2025

Medicaid Cancer Patients May Admit to SNFs for First Time

A new study revealed that of the Medicaid beneficiaries who were recently diagnosed with cancer, one in seven (14%) received care at a nursing home. More than half of these were using a nursing home for the first time.

The researchers analyzed nearly 340,000 claims from 2016 to 2019.

However, patients' entrance into a SNF may be limited, due to chemotherapy, palliative care and other needs.

Nursing homes and residents may see high costs. Chemotherapy drugs, for instance, are not covered under a Medicare Part A SNF stay.

Journal of the American Geriatrics

PT Shortage? You Ain't Seen 'Nuttin' Yet

The number of physical therapists in skilled nursing facilities is expected to face a steep decline over the next 12 years, a new report revealed.

In 2022 nursing homes had a shortage of 12,070 full-time PTs, with that number expected to widen significantly to 19,700 by 2027. The American Physical Therapy Association's survey indicates a smaller gap of 9,120 jobs by 2037, still representing a 3.3% deficit.

Some 8.9% of physical therapists in the skilled nursing sector said they are planning to retire or leave the profession next year.

McKnight's, 03/07/2025

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

ATLANTA: The CDC is planning to conduct a large-scale study to re-examine whether there is a connection between vaccines and autism. Dozens of scientific studies have failed to find evidence of a link. But the C.D.C. now falls under the purview of HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who has long expressed skepticism about the safety of vaccines and has vowed to revisit the data. (*The New York Times*).

IOWA: lawmakers are proposing a bill that could make it harder for Iowans to get a COVID-19 vaccine. A subcommittee approved a bill that would make it a misdemeanor to administer a "gene-based" vaccine, including COVID-19 vaccines.. The American Heart Association says the benefits of taking the vaccine outweigh the risks The Iowa Public Health Association opposes the bill (*KMTV-TV*).

ATLANTA: Following the postponement of a regularly scheduled February meeting of its vaccine advisory committee, the CDC announced the launch of a new tool that it says is designed to increase transparency about current and past members of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (*CIDRAP*).

THE WORLD: University of Hong Kong researchers retrospectively analyzed real-world data on 1,745 adult asthma patients hospitalized for COVID-19. Of those 621 patients received Paxlovid, 378 molnupiravir (Lagevrio) and 746 who received neither antiviral. Paxlovid recipients were at significantly lower risk for acute in-hospital death, post-acute in-hospital death all-cause hospitalization and heart attack (*Respiratory Research*).

AMERICA: An estimated 1% to 3% of children infected with SARS-CoV-2 will develop" long COVID, However, Children vaccinated against COVID-19 were more than 50% less likely to develop at least one long COVID symptom compared with unvaccinated children. They were 75% less likely to experience long COVID symptoms that affected daily function (*JAMA Network Open*).

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THE WORLD: Extracorporeal membrane oxygenation, or ECMO, is one of the most serious life support measures offered at a hospital, with critically ill patients often receiving both heart and lung support for a number of days or weeks during organ and respiratory failure. In a study of 3,860 ECMO patients. In-hospital mortality was 55.9% (2,158), with 81.2% of deaths occurring during ECMO (*The Lancet Respiratory Medicine*).

TEXAS & NEW MEXICO: Texas state health officials say as of Tuesday there were 25 new cases of measles since the end of last week, bringing Texas' total to 223. Twenty-nine people in Texas are hospitalized. New Mexico health officials announced three new cases Tuesday, bringing the state's total to 33. The outbreak has spread from Lea County, which neighbors the West Texas communities at the epicenter of the outbreak, to include one case in Eddy County (*AP*).

NEW MEXICO: An unvaccinated person who died in New Mexico has tested positive for measles, state health officials said, possibly the second such fatality in a growing outbreak that began in West Texas. The officials have not yet confirmed that measles was the cause of death, and said the person did not seek medical treatment before dying (*New York Times*).

MARYLAND: A positive case of measles was also identified in Maryland. The highly contagious virus was detected in a Howard County resident who had recently traveled internationally (*The Washington Post*).

OKLAHOMA & LOS ANGELES: The State Department of Health reported two measles cases in the state likely linked to ongoing outbreaks in West Texas and New Mexico. The individuals reportedly self-isolated and refrained from going out in public upon symptom onset. Also, LA county has its first case. The resident

recently traveled through LAX before going to a North Hollywood nail salon and an El Monte grocery store (*CBS News & CIDRAP*).

AMERICA: The FDA has issued recommendations for the composition of influenza shots for the upcoming respiratory virus season, but without input from its independent vaccine advisers. The FDA's Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee had been scheduled to meet Thursday to weigh in on the composition of the flu shots, but that session was canceled without explanation in late February (*CNN*).

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VERMONT: The Department of Health said a school-aged child is confirmed to have measles, the first case in 2025. "The child became sick after returning with their family from traveling internationally in recent days," the department said in a statement. "The risk to the public is believed to be low, as the child has been isolated from most community settings while they have been contagious. Investigation is ongoing" (*CIDRAP*).

COVID-19, 03/14/2025

World Total Cases
777,519,152

World Total Deaths
7,090,776

U.S. Total Deaths
1,218,325

World Health Organization

Five Years Later COVID Downgraded to Endemic

Five years after the pandemic began, COVID-19 is now more consistent with an endemic disease, U.S. health experts said. It has become similar to influenza - an endemic disease - in terms of the risk of severe illness, hospitalization and death.

The coronavirus, which causes COVID, is now less deadly, though it is more transmissible and is expected to continue experiencing waves, some of which could be severe.

There is no clear threshold for when a disease transitions from pandemic to endemic, but the endemicity of covid is largely agreed upon in the medical community.

The Washington Post, 03/12/2025

COVID = More Psychotropic Meds in Nursing Homes

Post-acute neuropsychiatric symptoms triggered by COVID-19 could raise the long-term use of multiple psychoactive drugs in older nursing home residents.

A study found signs of depression, anxiety, agitation and fatigue were among the most commonly observed symptoms among long-term care residents with COVID.

These symptoms led to an increase in medication use for adults 65-years and older

The researchers said “SARS-CoV-2 infection was associated with a greater number of psychotropic medication prescriptions, in particular antidepressant medication.”

The findings suggest that COVID-19 may promote psychotropic medication prescription that contributes to polypharmacy in frail older adults living in a long-term care facility.”

Canadian Geriatrics Journal., 03/12/2025

CMS Will Be OK - ‘Thank You Very Much’

Two former White House agency heads CMS should escape much of the meddling and purges currently taking place in other

federal agencies, a pair of former White House agency.

That was the consensus between Andy Slavitt, who briefly led CMS during the Obama White House, and Scott Gottlieb, MD, who led the Food and Drug Administration during President Trump’s first term.

At a NIC conference, both predicted the current tumult at the hands of the new Department of Government Efficiency will soon burn out, and that no major revisions of Medicaid policy pertaining to long-term care will occur.

McKnight’s, 03/07/2025

Bill Would Set Pay and Staffing in Nursing Homes

A bill has been introduced on behalf of SEIU in the Oregon Senate that would create a board to oversee working conditions in the direct care industry.

The board, appointed by the governor, would set pay and staffing standards for the roughly 60,000 people who provide care to seniors and developmentally disabled Oregonians.

Nearly all the pay for those workers comes from Medicaid money.

the new board would have real teeth, including the authority to make workplace rules—and to subpoena records from nursing and group homes, to depose management under oath, and to sue if employers violate board rules.

Salem Reporter, 03/08/2025

Missouri SNF Dodges HHS Bullet – for Now

Liberty Health and Wellness, a nursing home in Liberty, Missouri, has been granted a temporary restraining order against the HHS’ efforts to terminate its Medicare and Medicaid certification.

After a conference call with both parties, the court sided with the facility, stating that “based on the record before it, the Court has doubts that the Plaintiff’s residents are in any immediate jeopardy.”

Liberty has been a Special Focus Facility since 2022.

McKnight’s, 03/11/2025

ONE COLUMN

Bill Introduced to Address Loneliness In Older Adults

Legislation promoting programs that combat loneliness in older adults has been reintroduced by the leader of the US Senate Special Committee on Aging.

Committee Chairman Sen. Rick Scott (R-FL) and Sen. Tina Smith (D-MN), reintroduced the Social Engagement and Network Initiatives for Older Relief (SENIOR) Act. The proposal would add loneliness to the definition of disease prevention and health promotion services under the Older Americans Act.

The bipartisan bill also would require the Department of Health and Human Services to create a report on the effects of loneliness on older adults, recommend solutions and analyze the relationships between multigenerational family units, loneliness and older adults.

Argentum previously noted its [support for the legislation](#), which also would provide a comprehensive approach to reintegrating older adults into the general community.

In [2023](#), US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, MD, announced a “National Strategy to Advance Social Connections” to address an “epidemic of loneliness and isolation.”

In the wake of that advisory, the senior living industry held up assisted living as a way for older adults to strengthen social connections, bolstered by previous research.

A 2022 report from the American Seniors Housing Association and ATI Advisory found that senior living communities reduced social isolation and improved quality of life during the pandemic through greater access to social, physical and intellectual wellness than their counterparts living in the greater community.

And in [2021](#), a survey from Activated Insights reported that just 20% of senior living residents reported feeling “severely lonely.” The survey also revealed a potential decline in loneliness among older adults in assisted living and other congregate living settings from before the pandemic.

Senior Living, 02/11/2025

Price for Nursing Home Beds Down Again in 2024

Skilled nursing bed prices continued their slide in 2024, dropping to an average of \$83,800 from \$97,700 just a year ago.

While there are some outliers as mergers and acquisitions explode post-pandemic, the 2024 Irving Levin Associates connected the falling skilled nursing prices to the wide availability of underperforming properties.

It was just 2 ½ years ago that nursing home beds peaked above \$100,00 per bed, with NIC MAP reporting a high of \$106,340 in the third quarter of 2022. But at that time, deal volume was relatively low, with some investors warning of soft or inflated values.

McKnight's, 03/06/2025

Nursing Homes Will Struggle To Meet Staffing Rules

A study of nearly all (14,000) US nursing homes found that many providers will struggle to meet the CMS federal staffing mandate, especially those in states without mandates already in place.

A research paper noted that 18% of US facilities meet all three of CMS' provisions — standards that require a minimum of 3.48 total nurse staffing hours PPD day; 0.55 HPRD for RNs and 2.45 HPRD CNAs.

Although states that already have minimum staffing standards have higher overall staffing on average, most existing state staffing laws are less stringent than the new federal standard.

Health Affairs Scholar, February 2025

Upgraded LTC Quality Navigator Unveiled in Ohio

Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and Ohio Department of Aging (ODA) Director Ursel J. McElroy announced the launch of the newly enhanced Ohio Long-Term Care Quality Navigator.

Formerly known as the Ohio Nursing Home Quality Navigator, the online tool provides users with detailed information about the quality of long-term care

facilities across the state in single digital location.

The new name coincides with the addition of nearly 800 assisted living facilities to the Navigator, on top of the nearly 930 nursing homes that had previously been included.

Gov. DeWine news release, 02/20/2025

UnitedHealth to Dump 128 Sites to Satisfy DOJ Concerns

UnitedHealth Group and Amedisys outlined plans to divest "at minimum" 128 home health and hospice locations as they seek to close their \$3.3 billion merger.

The Department of Justice was concerned the merger would violate anti-trust laws.

The company said in the filing that once the divestitures are completed, it will operate only 10% of home health services in the U.S. and 4% of hospice services.

There will still be plenty of competition from 11,000 home health agencies and more than 5,000 hospice agencies across the U.S.

Becker's Hospital Review, 02/19/2025

WV to Turn Over Operation of Vets Home to Pvt Company

The West Virginia Department of Veterans Assistance is in the process of contracting a private company to operate its Veterans Nursing Facility in Clarksburg.

Kennedy said the cost of the facility's operation has become prohibitive, largely due to the need to utilize contracted nurses.

Because of state rules, the facility is unable to pay a competitive enough salary to retain directly employed nurses, which is why the department must use agency nurses.

Contracting the entire facility's operation would put the financial onus on the management company. The company would hire its own employees.

WV News, 03/10/2025

Briefly in the News

In a recent poll by KFF, a nonpartisan health research firm, as Congressional Republicans weigh major cuts to Medicaid, most voters do not want to see the public health plan's funding dialed back. Just 17% of respondents said they supported cuts to Medicaid. But 40% said they wanted to keep spending unchanged, and 42 percent said they would like it increased. KFF's poll also showed that support for work requirements drops to about 3 in 10 adults when those who initially supported them hear that most Medicaid enrollees are already working (*The New York Times*).

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*).

LTC Properties is planning to shed more of its SNFs as it implements a new seniors housing investment philosophy. The REIT plans to sell a portfolio of seven SNFs by the fourth quarter of 2025 and reinvest the expected \$8.3 million in senior housing (*LTC Properties earnings call*).

A growing number of states have made it easier for doctors who trained in other countries to get medical licenses, a shift supporters say could ease physician shortages in rural areas. The changes involve residency programs. Until recently, every state required physicians who completed a residency or similar training abroad to repeat the process in the U.S. before obtaining a full medical license. (*KFF Health News*).

The Veterans Administration (VA) indicates obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) was linked with an increased risk of Parkinson's disease, But continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) treatment reduced that risk. At 5 years after onset, veterans with OSA had 1.8 more cases of Parkinson's disease per 1,000, than those without the sleep disorder. Those who started CPAP early, within 2 years of onset, had 2.3 fewer cases of Parkinson's per 1,000 (*MedPage Today*).