

# IN THE NEWS

News for LTC Professionals  
in 100 Words-or-Less

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## THEY SAID IT

*Natural disasters do not discriminate. It doesn't matter how old you are, how much money you have, or how smart you think you may be - if you aren't prepared, nothing else matters"*

Florida Sen. Rick Scott Chairman of the *Special Committee on Aging at a hearing on Emergency Preparedness*

*"We were really surprised by how frequently [providers] move [up and down in Care Compare]"* lead author Tory Hogan, PhD, of a study at Ohio State University

*"While we have had very generous gifts before — whether for capital campaigns or to support our team member benevolence fund and the like — Mrs. Phillips' gift is, hands down, the largest gift in Well-Spring's history"* Lynn Wooten of Well-Spring on a \$24 million gift from a late resident Florence Phillips

## "Related Party" Deal May Lead to New State Laws

In an "related party" investigation into the operating practices of Colonial Heights Rehabilitation and Nursing Center, a Virginia nursing home, has caused state lawmakers to vow the laws will change.

The cost report showed that one entity owns both the nursing home operating company and a real estate company that leases the property back to the operator.

The rent increased significantly from \$2.6 million in 2022 to \$6.1 million in 2024 which analysts said likely generated a profit for the operator. But on the cost report it contributed to an \$89,000 loss for the facility.

WTVR-TV, 05/21/2025

## If You're a 1-Star Just Keep the Faith

Nursing home quality is in such flux in the US that more than a quarter of 5-star rated facilities later slid to the lowest rating and more than two-fifths climbed from the bottom to the top in an 11-year period.

Although CMS limits the number of nursing homes in each overall quality tier, most nursing homes did move up and down over time.

In all, 40.32% of 1-star nursing homes later received a 5-star rating, while 27.97% of 5-star nursing homes later received a 1-star rating for at least one month.

*Journal of the American Medical Directors Association, May 2025*

## Report: Did United Pay SNFs To Keep Residents In-house?

A *Guardian* newspaper report alleges UnitedHealth deployed in-house medical teams to around 2,000 nursing homes and offered cash incentives to limit hospital transfers to cut costs under its MA program.

Internal records viewed by the newspaper and whistleblower accounts suggest treatment for some residents in urgent need of hospital care was delayed or even denied.

Bonuses were reportedly tied to hospitalization rates, with one key metric labeled "admits per thousand," and high rates meant no financial rewards.

The insurer denied the allegations saying the Justice Department investigated and ultimately "declined to pursue the matter" after finding "significant factual inaccuracies."

Quartz, 05/21/2025

## Every Facility Should Have A 'Sugar Mama' Like this

When she died last August, Florence H. Phillips, a resident at Well-Spring for three decades, bequeathed a record \$24 million to the Greensboro, NC, continuing care retirement / life plan community

Although it is the largest donation ever made to Well-Spring, it's believed to be

the biggest bequest nationally to a retirement community.

The \$24 million gift is earmarked for Well-Spring's Residents Benevolence Assistance Fund to help the CCRC's residents who have outlived their assets by providing for uninterrupted care until the end of life.

Mrs. Phillips had lived at Well-Spring since shortly after it opened in 1993.

*McKnight's, 05/20/2025*

## New Survey Leaves More Questions than Answers

There's still ambiguity in how surveyors will interpret new elements of survey changes, but tightening up documentation to best reflect a resident's condition and care plan goals will be key for nursing homes adjusting to these.

CMS said the new survey aims to improve assessment accuracy, and major pitfalls lie in lack of updated documentation, especially when it comes to discharge planning, administering antipsychotics, and pharmacological interventions.

More clarity is needed on changes around QAPI. The changes also require a more careful monitoring of the MDS, with less room allowed for mistakes.

*Skilled Nursing News, 05/16/2025*

## GOP Votes 'Yea' - Changes Likely to Medicaid, Etc.

Changes to Medicaid, food stamps, border security and taxes under a sweeping Republican bill that passed the House early Thursday.

The proposal, which President Donald Trump has dubbed the "big, beautiful bill," would enact Trump's major campaign promises like eliminating taxes on workers' tips and overtime.

amendments including accelerating work requirements and paying states not to expand the program under the Affordable Care Act.

The proposal will move up the start date of Medicaid work requirements from Jan. 1, 2029, to Dec. 31, 2026, in a concession to conservative hard-liners who have been pushing for deeper cuts to the program.

Politico, 05/22/2025

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

**THE WORLD:** World Health Organization members have adopted a treaty aimed at preparing for and responding to future pandemics, what countries say is both a tangible example of how they're learning the lessons of Covid-19 and a marker for the continued importance of international collaboration (*Stat*).

**WASHINGTON, D.C:** The Trump administration has replaced the government's main portal for information about COVID with a website arguing that the coronavirus leaked from a lab, throwing its weight behind a theory of the pandemic's origins that is so far not backed by direct evidence and that has divided intelligence agencies. Covid.gov and Covidtests.gov, federal websites that used to deliver information about Covid and allow people to order tests, now redirect to the lab leak web page (*The New York Times*).

**AMERICA:** A new Annenberg Poll shows that 87% of Americans say the benefit of childhood measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccination outweighs the risk, and 67% say they know that MMR vaccines don't cause autism. 2025 may see the highest measles case count in the United States since the disease was officially eliminated in 2000 (*CIDRAP*).

**POLAND/ U.S:** In a study using EHR, of the more than 1.2 million participants aged 0 to 20 years – average age 7.8 years – 297,920 (24.6%) with congenital heart defects had had COVID-19. Children and adolescents who had COVID-19 were at significantly greater risk for high blood pressure, abnormal ventricular rhythms, myocarditis, heart failure, cardiomyopathy, cardiac arrest, thromboembolism, chest pain, and palpitations (*Nature Communications*).

**AMERICA:** COVID-19 treatments authorized for emergency use by the FDA are associated with few serious adverse effects (SAE), according to a rapid systematic review. Researchers from the University of Southern California found no link between any SAE not

already identified on the product packaging with oral COVID-19 antivirals such as Paxlovid (*Open Forum Infectious Diseases*).

**WASHINGTON, D.C:** The federal government on Monday will resume collecting defaulted student loan payments from millions of people for the first time since the start of the pandemic. The Trump administration said it would collect the debt through a Treasury Department program that withholds payments through tax refunds, wages and government benefits. Nearly 43 million people owe money/ The government has not collected on defaulted loans since March 2020 (*U.S. News*).

**ENGLAND:** Patients with advanced skin cancer could be fast-tracked to take part in a "revolutionary" trial of a new cancer vaccine. The needle-free injection boosts the immune system's response and helps it attack and recognize cancer cells to help stop the disease returning (*BBC*).

**THE WORLD:** Data from Pennsylvania State University investigators suggest that poor self-reported general health is substantially more common among US adults with long COVID than among those without persistent symptoms (26% vs 16%), Long-COVID patients also had more unfavorable mental and physical health and lower daily efficiency when completing daily activities for more than 13 days a month (*PLOS One*).

**MONTANA:** An asbestos screening clinic in a small Montana town where thousands have been sickened by toxic dust from a nearby mine, has been abruptly shuttered by authorities following a court order to seize the clinic's assets to pay off a judgment to the railroad BNSF. The Lincoln County Sheriff's Office closed on Wednesday the Center for Asbestos Related Disease in Libby, about 50 miles from the U.S.-Canada border (*AP*).

**THE WORLD:** Patients with long COVID may exhibit persistent inflammation in the heart and lungs for up to 1 year following acute COVID-19 infection, even when standard medical tests return normal

results. study authors, from the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, suggest the inflammation may increase the risk for future cardiac and pulmonary conditions (*Journal of Nuclear Medicine*).

**AMERICA:** The CDC said a large number of measles cases are being missed by health authorities. The agency is now struggling to keep up with requests for support from states responding to outbreaks. A senior scientist said the cases are either not reported or underreported (*CBS News*).

**AMERICA:** The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) will likely remove recommendations from the CDC that children, teens, and pregnant women receive the COVID-19 vaccine. The CDC currently recommends that everyone ages 6 months and older be vaccinated against COVID, a universal recommendation that it has had in place since September 2023 (*The Wall Street Journal*).

**AMERICA:** The three leading respiratory illnesses – flu, COVID-19, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) are not presenting much of an intrusion. The CDC notes that, nationally, flu (2.9%), COVID (2.9%), and RSV (0.9%) test positivity stayed about the same. Wastewater levels for COVID are low, while for influenza A and RSV they are very low (*CDC*).

**THE CONGO:** Ebola patients in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) were much less likely to die if they were vaccinated against the viral hemorrhagic infection and received prompt treatment with monoclonal antibodies or an antiviral drug and enhanced supportive care. Patients who received the vaccine were 1.7 times less likely to die than their unvaccinated peers (*Virology Journal*).

### **COVID-19, 05/22/2025**

**World Total Cases**  
777,751,517

**World Total Deaths**  
7,095,536

**U.S. Total Deaths**  
1,223,238

World Health Organization

## **FDA Details Plans To Limit COVID Shots**

FDA officials have outlined their new approach to COVID-19 vaccine approvals, allowing immunogenicity endpoints for high-risk groups, while calling for randomized controlled trials for those at lower risk.

The agency will allow immunogenicity data to approve COVID shots for adults ages 65 and up, and for all people 6 months and up who have one or more risk factors for severe disease.

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*MedPage Today, 05/20/2025*

## **Lifting COVID-19 Visitation Limits Made Little Difference**

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services CMS recommended restricting visitors from entering nursing homes as a precaution. The restriction was lifted on September 17, 2020.

A study has found that restricting visitors made little difference - nursing home infections closely reflected that of the surrounding community.

The analyses found no statistically significant increase in nursing home infection rates associated with the lifting of the federal restriction.

The researcher concluded lifting the federal visitation restriction had a negligible impact on nursing home infection rates and that implementing visitation restrictions should only happen under extreme circumstances.

*National Library of Medicine, 05/15/2025*

## **Effort to Re-define Skin Coding At End-of-Life**

Two key wound care groups are finalizing a proposal for new codes that would help skilled nursing providers avoid newly created diagnoses gaps for end-of-life skin breakdown that could lead to missed reimbursement and potential liability risks.

The push comes a year and a half after nursing homes won the right to stop coding wounds as pressure injuries that occur as part of the dying process.

The Post-Acute Wound and Skin Integrity Council began working with the American Academy of Dermatology Association's coding expert. The organizations are now awaiting a CMS response to their latest recommendation resubmitted in September 2024.

*McKnight's, 05/18/2025*

## **SNF Training Programs See Staffing Successes**

One New York post-acute care chain is developing the next generation of certified nursing assistants with an in-house training program that is helping fill its staffing ranks.

Two NYC Health + Hospitals facilities have seen staffing success with its Nurse Aide Training Program that began in 2022 at its location in Harlem.

Since its inception, some 80 nurse aides have graduated and 42 have since been on-boarded.

Another of NYC Health + Hospitals locations in Brooklyn, has benefited greatly from the program as the additional aides have helped lower new pressure injury rates among short-stay residents from 4.1% to 1.9%.

*McKnight's, 05/20/2025*

## **CMS Expanding Audits Of MA Plans in U.S.**

CMS announced an immediate and major expansion of its audit efforts for Medicare Advantage (MA) plans, aiming to crack down on overbilling and recover government funds.

Key steps for audit efforts include adopting new technology to analyze medical records, increasing the number of plans and records audited each year and expanding its team of medical coders from 40 to 2,000 by late 2025.

According to the CMS, the last major overpayment recovery came from a 2007 audit, despite estimates suggesting that MA plans overbill Medicare by \$17B to \$43B annually.

*Seeking Alpha, 05/21/2025*

## **ONE COLUMN**

### **Senior Living Unites To 'Protect Medicaid'**

As Congress deals with the budget reconciliation process, senior living entities – assisted and independent living – are urging policymakers to protect programs and policies that support older adults.

The House narrowly passed a budget blueprint that implies big spending cuts for Medicaid. The House resolution instructs the Energy and Commerce Committee to find \$880 billion in cuts over 10 years, with almost all of those cuts expected to come from the Medicaid program.

The Senate Finance Committee was instructed to increase the deficit by \$1.5 trillion over 10 years, without clear implications for Medicaid cuts.

Although House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) and President Trump have said they will not cut benefits and instead will focus on "waste, fraud and abuse," doing so won't be enough to meet the \$880 billion reduction goal.

Among Medicaid changes being considered are reducing federal payments for certain beneficiaries and adding work requirements for others.

The National Center for Assisted Living said one in five assisted living residents relies on Medicaid, and any reductions would threaten optional Medicaid benefits, such as home- and community-based waiver programs.

LeadingAge CEO Katie Smith Sloan implored Congress to not ignore the needs of older adults, saying that Medicaid sustains long-term services and supports to deliver care in assisted living communities, nursing homes and the greater community.

"The numbers in this budget resolution call for deep reductions in federal financing of the Medicaid program," Sloan said "Such cuts would force states to make decisions that will severely limit older adults' access to care and the ability of our nonprofit and mission-driven members to provide that care.

"Simply put, the current federal financing of Medicaid must be preserved."

*Senior Living,*

## **SCOTUS' Okay to Deport Venezuelans Will Hit SNFs**

The Supreme Court has granted the Trump administration's request to end temporary protected status for more than 300,000 Venezuelans.

Supreme Court Justices on Monday paused a ruling by a federal judge in San Francisco that blocked an action to fully terminate Venezuelan employees' 2023 Temporary Protected Status designation.

That action by the Secretary of Homeland Security also partially terminated Haitians' TPS and placed the Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans humanitarian parole program under attack.

LeadingAge had urged HHS to end the deportation of immigrant workers, a population that represents 20% of the long-term care workforce.

McKnight's, 05/23/2025

## **Judge Slaps Bankrupt SNFs with \$15M Penalty**

Two companies running nursing homes in Western Pennsylvania have been ordered to pay more than \$15 million in restitution a year and half after their criminal conviction in a fraud case related to understaffing.

A federal judge ordered Comprehensive Healthcare Management Services, operator of Brighton Rehabilitation and Wellness Center, and the affiliated operator of Mount Lebanon Rehabilitation and Wellness Center to pay \$12.6 million and \$2.7 million in restitution, respectively.

The facilities previously asked the court to override federal prosecutors' recommendations for millions in restitution, noting that the two facilities and their business backers are both in the bankruptcy process.

McKnight's, 05/21/2025

## **Charges vs Staff Halted But May Come Back**

The remaining charges against staff at Colonial Heights (Virginia) Rehabilitation and Nursing Center will not proceed in court.

The Commonwealth Attorney confirmed his office decided to *nolle prosequi* the current charges, meaning they were dropped but could be brought back.

He said while investigators gathered evidence, they learned of more potential charges and substantially more victims against a defendant.

This comes months after 18 employees were charged following an investigation of elder abuse at the center. One woman died as a result of the care she received.

WWBT-TV, 05/19/2025

## **Oklahoma Bookkeeper Embezzled \$377K from SNF**

Last week Jessica Dawn Burton, 53, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit wire fraud, which led to the embezzlement of more than \$377,000 from a nursing home.

Burton had been employed as a bookkeeper for a nursing home in Hydro, Oklahoma, from August 2022 through November 2023.

While employed, Burton wrote checks from the company's bank account to herself and three other conspirators.

In total, Burton issued 223 unauthorized checks using the owner's signature that amounted to \$377,443.45.

Burton will face up to 20 years in federal prison and a fine of up to \$250,000 at sentencing

KOKH-TV, 05/21/2025

## **MO Repealing Paid Sick Leave and Min. Wage**

Missouri Senate Republicans voted to repeal portions of a voter-approved law that allowed employees to earn paid sick leave and a higher minimum wage both issues impacting long-term care.

Members of the Senate voted 22-11 to pass legislation that repeals parts of Proposition A, which Missouri voters approved in November with 57.6% of the vote.

Because the legislation, which was previously approved by the House, was unchanged by the Senate, the bill now goes to Gov. Mike Kehoe.

St. Louis Public Radio, 05/15/2025

## **Briefly in the News**

President Donald Trump warned holdout House Republicans not to tank his top legislative priority by demanding deeper Medicaid cuts during a private session with GOP lawmakers Tuesday. According to Republicans who attended the meeting in the Capitol basement, Trump offered a simple message to hardline conservatives threatening to vote against the bill: "Don't f\*\*\* around with Medicaid" (**Modern Healthcare**).

Marijuana sold in Arizona has been recalled by the state's health department due to fungus contamination. Marijuana is legal for medical use in 38 states, and legal for recreational use in 24 states for those over the age of 21. Five more states - Wisconsin, Florida, Hawaii, South Dakota, and South Carolina - could approve use through legislation this year (**Newsweek**).

PACS Group stated in a Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) filing that it is delaying the release of its quarterly earnings for the first quarter - a federal requirement for publicly traded companies. PACS is undergoing a federal investigation following allegations made by an institutional short seller, into the nursing home giant's referral and reimbursement practices (**Skilled Nursing News**).

President Trump signed an executive order that aims to create a center for homeless veterans in Los Angeles and to improve medical care across the VA. The order calls for constructing a National Center for Warrior Independence on the campus of the West Los Angeles VA Medical Center that would provide housing and services to 3,000 homeless veterans currently in LA (**Military.com**).

Federal prosecutors sought a maximum prison sentence of nearly 20 years for Michael Kestner, 73, the CEO of Pain MD, a company found to have given hundreds of thousands of questionable injections to patients. Instead, he got 18 months largely due to his age and health conditions. Kestner's lawyers argued he would not do well in federal prison. Pain MD ran as many as 20 clinics in Tennessee, Virginia, and North Carolina throughout much of the 2010s (**CBS News**).