

IN THE NEWS

News for LTC Professionals
in 100 Words-or-Less

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THEY SAID IT

"Study my brain. I'm sorry" in note found on Shane Tamura who killed four people in NYC office tower

"Medicare and Medicaid have been enormous policy successes that have increased Americans' health and longevity while improving financial protections" Lauren Nicholas, a health economist at University of Colorado, Denver speaking on the 60th anniversary of the programs

"I'm not a politician" the new director of the National Institutes of Health, Jay Bhattacharya, insists. However, the fear for many that science and American politics have become intertwined as never before.

"The days of the Department of Labor imposing fines and back wages through its own in-house courts are over" Rob Johnson, a senior attorney at the Institute for Justice and counsel for a farm for which an appeals court overturned fines issued by DOL administrative judges

Dems Introduce Bill To Reverse Health Cuts

Democrats are ramping up efforts against the \$1.1 trillion in healthcare cuts President Donald Trump enacted this month.

On Wednesday, Senate Democrats staged a pair of news conferences to highlight the impacts of the "One Big Beautiful Bill" and to unveil legislation that would repeal its \$964 billion in Medicaid cuts over 10 years and the \$124 billion it slashed from the health insurance exchanges.

The bill passed both houses of Congress, and President Trump signed it into law July 4.

That makes chances of undoing parts of the bill slim, even though final vote margins were narrow.

Modern Healthcare, 07/30/2025

Feds Remove Infection Control Surveys from Annuals

federal officials announced in a memo to state directors Wednesday the focused infection control surveys are no longer part of the standard survey process,

The memo last week from CMS proclaimed, "any COVID-19 or infection control concerns should be conducted through complaint investigations outside of the LTCSP process."

Infection control-specific surveys were instituted during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic have consistently been among the most cited F-Tags since then.

In fiscal 2024, failure to meet the specific requirements of F-880 led to tags at 42% of nursing homes surveyed, making it the No. 1 citation by year's end.

McKnight's, 07/30/2025

Checking Prior Auths - AHCA Wants Info from Members

The American Health Care Association (AHCA) is re-releasing its Medicare Advantage (MA) data initiative for 2025, following its initial launch in 2024.

AHCA members are asked to share Medicare Advantage data using the tool for August 2025 (8/1-8/31/25) and/or September 2025 to support continued efforts to assess how plans are implementing new regulations, particularly those related to prior authorizations for skilled nursing facility (SNF) care.

The revised tracking tool includes administrative costs associated with these authorizations and appeals.

This initiative aligns with ongoing federal oversight and growing attention to Medicare Advantage practices.

AHCA/NCAL, 07/29/2025

Happy 60th Anniversary to Medicare and Medicaid

July 30th – 60 years ago, the Medicaid and Medicare programs were signed into law by former President Lyndon B. Johnson. It was July 30, 1965, and both programs were established within the Social Security Act.

Designed as federal programs to assist the elderly, disabled individuals and those with low income, both have grown into the largest sources of health care coverage in the country.

Before the programs were established, around half of all Americans over 65 had no means of medical insurance, forcing them to pay hefty prices or forgo care entirely.

Newsweek, 07/30/2025

Senator Bernie Forecasts Medicaid Cuts to SNFs

Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) is warning nursing homes are likely to see cuts to their Medicaid reimbursement rates soon, threatening not only patient services and workforce initiatives but also workers' livelihoods.

At a news conference Sanders underscored the potential economic fallout of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, which cuts nearly \$1 trillion from the Medicaid program.

Sanders said "some 27% of nursing homes have indicated that they will be forced to close their doors and 58% will be forced to substantially reduce staff at a time when many nursing homes are already grossly understaffed."

McKnight's, 07/30/2025

CMS Increases 2026 SNF Pay Raise To 3.2%

Nursing homes will see a 3.2% increase in their Medicare Part A payments next fiscal year.

That's a jump from a pay rule proposed in April, in which CMS proposed a 2.8% increase for fiscal 2026.

It is based on final SNF market basket of 3.3%, plus a 0.6% market basket forecast error adjustment, and a negative 0.7% productivity adjustment.

The 2026 increase is still significantly less than recent years. Providers received a 4.2% pay hike ahead of this fiscal year and 4.0% the year before.

McKnight's, 07/31/2025

IN THE TRENCHES –

COVID-19 & Other Outbreaks in the U.S. and the World

WASHINGTON, D.C: Democrats on the Senate Health Committee launched an investigation last week into HHS Sec. Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s firing of all members of a CDC vaccine advisory panel. Led by ranking member Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), who caucuses with Democrats, the lawmakers asked for detailed information about why Kennedy dismissed members of the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), who else was involved in the process, and how the new members were identified and vetted (*The Hill*).

AMERICA: The CDC and FDA have launched investigations into separate *Salmonella* outbreaks involving frozen sprouted beans and pistachio cream. The CDC said 11 people in 10 states have been sickened by a strain of *Salmonella* linked to Deep-brand frozen sprouted mat (moth) beans and frozen sprouted moong (mung) beans. Illnesses started on dates ranging from October 22, 2024, to June 24, 2025. Four people have been hospitalized, with no deaths reported (*CDC/FDA News Releases*).

CALIFORNIA: Undocumented immigrants were at a sharply higher risk of death during the worst years of the COVID-19 pandemic. Researchers at the University of California at Santa Cruz analyzed death certificates and other demographic data of people who died from natural causes in California. They found that undocumented people had 55% increase in death rate. That compared to 22% for immigrants who appeared to be documented and 12% for US-born citizens (*American Journal of Public Health*).

AMERICA: According to the CDC as of July 15, COVID cases were growing or likely growing in 27 states including Texas, Illinois, Kentucky, Virginia and Ohio. Rates of positive Covid tests have also been increasing in recent weeks, specifically in the southern region of the country. N.B.1.8.1 is the current dominant variant in the United States, accounting for 43% of all new Covid cases, according

to the CDC. It's an offshoot of the XVD.1.5.1 strain, a descendant of the omicron variant (*NBC News*).

THE WORLD: Each year, 263 million people get malaria. But from the parasite's perspective, infecting humans is harder than you might think. It requires completing an epic journey within the tiny body of a mosquito. First, the mosquito must suck the blood of an individual infected with malaria — bringing the Plasmodium parasite into the insect's gut. Then the parasite must travel to the critter's salivary glands, where it's poised to be injected into the mosquito's next victim the bug bites (*NPR*).

FOUR STATES: Amid ongoing record post-elimination measles activity in the United States, four states, Colorado, Iowa, New Mexico, and Wyoming, have reported more measles cases. Meanwhile, in its weekly update, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) added 10 more cases to the national total, which has now reached 1,319 cases (*CIDRAP*).

AMERICA: Rich's Ice Cream is recalling 110,292 cases of frozen dessert products across 23 states due to potential listeria contamination, which can lead to serious illness. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration said the recall, which was first initiated in June, was recently updated to a Class II threat, meaning the product "may cause temporary or medically reversible adverse health consequences" (*CBS News*).

CALIFORNIA: An outbreak of *Salmonella* Typhimurium has been linked to raw milk from a California dairy farm. The outbreak sickened 171 people in California and four other states, including 120 children. The outbreak first came to light in 2023. San Diego County reported eight salmonellosis cases in people who reported drinking raw milk produced exclusively by a licensed local dairy farm (*CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Reports*).

AMERICA: Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has formally rescinded federal recommendations for all flu vaccines containing *thimerosal*, a mercury-based preservative that the anti-vaccine movement has falsely linked to

autism. The decision cements a move last month by vaccine advisers whom Mr. Kennedy named to the federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices after abruptly firing all 17 previous members (*The New York Times*).

CAPITOL HILL: The federal program to combat H.I.V. in developing nations earned a reprieve last week when Congress voted to restore \$400 million in funding. But that may be short-lived: Officials at the State Department have been mapping out a plan to shut it down in the coming years. Planning documents for the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, obtained by The New York Times, call for the organization to set a new course that focuses on "transitioning" countries away from U.S. assistance, some in as little as two years (*The New York Times*).

CAPITOL HILL: Senate Republicans say they are working on a bipartisan health package to lower drug and health insurance costs; a development that's news to some Democrats who remain skeptical that their GOP colleagues will work with them. Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-La., is leading the talks, with a particular focus on more transparency from pharmacy benefit managers, so-called upcoding practices in Medicare Advantage and other health items (*Roll Call*).

PORTUGAL: Almost 20% of people who were hospitalized for COVID-19 infections early in the pandemic still had signs of impairment with brain function 2 years after infection. The study came from Portugal, in a region hit hard by the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, verbal memory, visual memory, executive functions, language, and information processing speed and attention were evaluated (*Scientific Reports*).

COVID-19, 07/24/2025

World Total Cases
778,417,964

World Total Deaths
7,098,699

U.S. Total Deaths
1,225,528

World Health Organization

It's Official – Susan Monarez Will Head Up the CDC

The Senate voted along party lines to confirm Susan Monarez as the new director of the CDC.

Monarez has been serving as the acting head of the CDC since January. She was viewed as somewhat surprising pick for the CDC role because unlike most recent CDC directors, she holds a Ph.D. but is not a medical doctor.

Monarez said at her confirmation hearing "If I'm confirmed as CDC director, I look forward to supporting the secretary with science and evidence and making sure that I am giving him the best information possible."

CBS News, 07/30/2025

CMS Clarification Allows Some SPs to Return to Work

An updated interpretation as to who qualifies as a licensed speech-language pathologist could help some nursing home therapists get back to work.

In May CMS issued a new definition of the term "licensed," which had been changed to exclude provisional licensees in a benefits policy manual.

That interpretation made it seem that provisionally licensed speech-language pathologists — those completing on-site work following graduation — could not bill Medicare for their services.

On Tuesday, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association said CMS had again reversed course and clarified that its updated interpretation allows individuals holding provisional or temporary licenses, to provide services to Medicare beneficiaries."

McKnight's, 07/31/2025

Average Retiree Facing \$173K In Healthcare Costs

The financial cost of care for retirees has gotten higher than ever, with new research from Fidelity Investments indicating Americans are ill-prepared to cope with the financial toll of medication, medical care, and health insurance in retirement.

According to Fidelity's 24th annual Retiree Health Care Cost Estimate, a 65-year-old retiring this year will need an average of \$172,500 to cover health care and medical expenses throughout retirement.

The figure marks a more than 4% increase from last year's estimate and continues a steady rise since the company's first projection of \$80,000 in 2002.

InvestmentNews, 07/30/2025

M'care Would Pay Pharmacists For SNF Clinical Services

A new bipartisan bill would allow Medicare to reimburse for certain pharmacist-administered tests, treatments and vaccinations for illnesses like influenza, respiratory syncytial virus and strep throat.

The Equitable Community Access to Pharmacist Services (ECAPS) Act adds pharmacists to the Social Security Administration's list of eligible clinicians but also shifts costs. It would pay pharmacists at 80% of physicians' fees, likely saving Medicare dollars while also expanding access to testing and related services.

The bill's introduction comes as long-term care pharmacists are being forced to seek ways of improving revenue.

McKnight's, 07/28/2025

Judge Gives OK for NJ Providers to Keep Fighting

A New Jersey Superior Court judge has denied the state's attempt to dismiss a lawsuit by a group of long-term care providers aiming to invalidate a minimum staffing rule that they call unconstitutional.

Judge Douglas Hurd ruled in favor of six nursing homes and the American Health Care Association of New Jersey after the state's staffing mandate, which took effect in February 2021, imposed hefty fines for each day of staffing noncompliance.

Providers argued that the law violated their due process and right not to face the excessive \$1,000 per day fine.

Some facilities have received fines above \$100,000.

McKnight's

ONE COLUMN

It can detect Melanoma In Just 15 Minutes

A simple skin patch and COVID-like test could soon allow people to test for melanoma in the comfort of their home—helping catch the most dangerous type of skin cancer early without the need for a biopsy or blood draw.

Melanoma is the most dangerous type of skin cancer because it has a high potential to spread rapidly to other organs if not caught early. Unlike basal cell or squamous cell carcinomas, which tend to grow slowly and remain localized, melanoma can quickly invade lymph nodes and metastasize to the lungs, brain, or liver.

With funding from NIH, researchers from the University of Michigan developed a silicone patch with star-shaped microneedles called the 'ExoPatch'.

The star-shaped needles of the patch make puncture easier and less painful, but they are so small that they only go through the top-most layer of the skin, the epidermis, and do not draw blood.

After being used on the skin, the patch then goes through a quick process before the test strip provides the result—two lines for signs of melanoma and one line for a negative result.

The test successfully distinguished between melanoma and healthy tissues with a 3.5-fold darker line in cancerous samples.

The ExoPatch detected 11.5 times more exosomal protein from melanoma tissue samples.

After just 15 minutes, on the skin, the patch is examined under a microscope to confirm the exosomes adhered well to the microneedles. researchers dissolved the gel and ran the sample through the test strips.

The American Cancer Society reports that around 104,960 new melanomas will be diagnosed this year in the US, with about 8,430 people expected to die of the disease.

Newsweek, 07/29/2025

Medical Directors Now Need Certification in Florida

A new Florida law that will go into effect over the next year, sets higher expectations for medical directors and introduces stronger accountability measures for monitoring patient safety culture.

Under the new law, nursing home medical directors must hold, or be actively pursuing, certification as a Certified Medical Director through a credentialing organization recognized by the state's Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA).

The new law is designed to raise the bar for clinical leadership in nursing homes, aiming to ensure that medical directors have specialized training and professional credentials directly relevant to long-term care.

PALTMed, 07/14/2025

Note Found on Gunman Talked of Serious Brain Injury

Police said a three-page note found on the gunman who shot four people to death in a Manhattan office tower, railed against the National Football League, which has offices in the building where the shooting took place, saying it had concealed the danger of the sport in favor of profits.

The note carried by the gunman, Shane Tamura, a former high school football player, referred to chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or C.T.E., a brain disease that has afflicted people who play contact sports and can only be diagnosed after death.

Tamura shot himself in the chest, rather than the head.

The New York Times, 07/28/2025

South Carolina Man Charged With Abuse of a SNF Resident

Robin C. Hatley, 61, has been charged with Abuse of a Vulnerable Adult and booked into the Greenville County Detention Center.

Authorities allege that on June 14, 2025, Hatley, a caregiver at Pearl at Five Forks Memory Care Center in Simpsonville, S.C., struck a resident of the facility

multiple times on the head, face, and nose.

Pearl at Five Forks Memory Care Center reported this incident to law enforcement and cooperated fully with investigators.

Hatley could get up to five years in prison, a fine of up to \$5,000, or both.

SC AG news release, 07/18/2025

Lifestyle Interventions Slow The Cognitive Decline Clock

A \$50 million study funded by the Alzheimer's Association has found that lifestyle interventions can protect at-risk older adults from normal cognitive decline for up to two years.

The more structured and supportive the intervention, the greater the apparent benefits, the researchers report. Clinicians can use the pioneering results to counsel patients in staying cognitively healthy.

Participants were split into two lifestyle intervention groups. One was provided with ongoing encouragement to make self-selected lifestyle changes, and another was given a highly structured intervention.

The investigators believe that this structured approach especially helped to build cognitive resilience against cognitive decline.

McKnight's, Clinical Daily News, 07/28/2025

A Boost for Nebraska Assisted Living Communities

The Nebraska Appropriations Committee recently agreed to fund a \$3.2 million increase in provider rates for rural assisted living communities, bringing rural rates in line with those paid to urban providers.

The increase is the result of a 2022 state Department of Health and Human Services study that found that urban communities received a higher rate despite offering similar services.

This year's budget will increase rural assisted living single occupancy daily rates from \$62.73 to match the urban rate of \$73.91 in the next fiscal year.

Senior Living

Briefly in the News

After months of unconfirmed reports about a potential federal probe into its Medicare business, UnitedHealth Group, the giant health care conglomerate confirmed it was cooperating with the DOJ and responding to both formal criminal and civil requests. UnitedHealth said it had "proactively reached out" to the Justice Department after news reports of a government investigation had surfaced, according to a company statement (***The New York Times***).

A consortium consisting of Nordic Capital and Permira is in talks for a potential takeover of Bavarian Nordic A/S, a Copenhagen-listed vaccine maker. The private equity firms and Bavarian are having ongoing discussions, the Danish company said in a statement that confirmed an earlier Bloomberg News report. There's no certainty an offer will be made, it added (***Bloomberg***).

U.S. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is planning to remove all the members of an advisory panel that determines what cancer screenings and other preventive health measures insurers must cover. However, a Department of Health and Human Services spokesperson said Kennedy had not yet made a decision regarding the 16-member U.S. Preventive Services Task (***The Wall Street Journal***).

Almost 1.8 million people have been disenrolled from Medicaid health coverage in Texas in the last two years. Those Americans have lost their health insurance as part of the unwinding process happening nationwide after Medicaid coverage was expanded following the COVID pandemic. The Texas Health and Human services Commission said, "Federal guidance required HHSC to redetermine eligibility for 6 million Medicaid clients over the course of 12 months" (***Newsweek***).

HHS Sec. Bobby Kennedy, Jr. is planning to remove all the members of an advisory panel that determines what cancer screenings and other preventive health measures insurers must cover. Kennedy apparently plans to dismiss all 16 panel members of the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force because he views them as too "woke" (***The Wall Street Journal***).