

# IN THE NEWS

News for LTC Professionals  
in 100 Words-or-Less

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## They said it

*"Being prepared, having your state survey notebooks ready, having all your entrance conference information ready before the surveyors come. You can set up a cadence of getting that information on a weekly basis, even if you're not in the survey window"* Peggy Connerton, associate vice president of Covenant Living Communities speaking at the LeadingAge annual meeting

*"This finding that dementia was associated with being ineligible for community-based palliative care as determined by practicing clinicians is counterintuitive"* from a study indicating dementia patients are less likely to be referred for palliative care

*"Seeing all 50 states come forward to reimagine the future of rural health is an extraordinary moment"* CMS Administrator Dr. Mehmet Oz commenting on the fact that all 50 states submitted applications for the Rural Health Transformation Program

## Better Not Call a He or She in a CA SNF

The California Supreme Court overruled a lower court and decreed that nursing home employees who deliberately and repeatedly refer to transgender patients with a name or pronoun different from the one they prefer can be charged with a crime under state law.

Chief Justice Patricia Guerrero wrote the statute "properly regulates discriminatory conduct aimed at vulnerable seniors who typically constitute a captive audience, residing in long-term care facilities."

She wrote the law doesn't prohibit nursing-home staff from expressing their views about gender, if the staff member does not deliberately and repeatedly misgender the resident.

Yahoo News, 11/06/2025

## Shutdown's Over Now Here Comes MDS Validation Audits

Government efficiency!

In June CMS said its new Skilled Nursing Facility Validation Program would launch in August. It's November and providers are still waiting.

Selection is not yet widespread, although a handful of providers attending the LeadingAge annual meeting in Boston last week said they had been selected for early participation.

CMS wants to review measures calculated based on MDS assessments that will feed quality results in the fiscal 2027 program year.

Auditing firm Healthcare Management Solutions will request 10 medical records from each provider selected, who will have 45 days to cough up the records.

McKnight's, 11/11/2025

## Nursing Homes Hiring More Advanced Practice Clinicians

About 41% of nursing homes increased use of advanced practice providers (APP) — including nurse practitioners and physician assistants — between 2012 and 2019.

Researchers from the University of Pennsylvania found that during the same period, 30-day rehospitalization rates of former acute-care patients decreased in those facilities.

About one-third of nursing homes (33%) increased APP visits by 5% to 40%, while 17% increased visits by those providers by 41% to 70%.

Ironically, the lower rehospitalization effect was only statistically significant, showing a 1.1% drop, in the group with the less dramatic increases.

McKnight's, 11/13/2025

## US News Out with '26 Best Nursing Homes

More than 2,700 skilled nursing providers made *U.S. News & World Report's* 2026 list of Best Nursing Homes, proving their meddle across a broadly expanded set of

measures. that offer consumers an alternative to ratings provided by the federal government.

*U.S. News* nearly doubled its criteria for inclusion this year, rating facility performance on 17 quality measures.

The resulting list includes fewer than 19% of the nation's nursing homes and only those that earned "high-performing" marks for short-term rehabilitation care or long-term care.

Just 1,064 nursing homes earned that designation across both care types.

*U.S. News and World Report*

## Federal Case Claims SNF Forced Off-Clock Training

A policy that reportedly rounded off time units is at the heart of a federal complaint filed by a former employee against Jackson County Medical, a Michigan nursing facility.

Brandon Wheeler also claims in court documents that employees would not be allowed to clock into the facility's time-keeping system if they did not perform certain tasks off-the-clock.

He is attempting to gain class-action status for the alleged Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) violations since, he said, "hundreds" of employees would have been affected.

*McKnight's, 11/11/2025*

## NJ Voters Cared About Healthcare & Affordability

Voters are nearly unanimous in their concern over how important kitchen table issues are to their vote this election — including voters ages 50+.

In the lead-up to Tuesday's election a Rutgers-Eagleton Poll in collaboration with AARP New Jersey found that voters 65 + are especially passionate about health care — nearly all say access to quality, affordable health care is important to their vote (97%). Nine in 10 voters ages 50 to 64 say the same (90%).

Affordability of property taxes and utility rates, jobs and the economy, and prices rising faster than their income are all issues that scored high with over 90%.

Rutgers University news release, 11/03/2025

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

**AMERICA:** The fall COVID-19 vaccine season is starting slowly for Pfizer, with U.S. sales of its Comirnaty shots sinking 25% after the CDC last month stopped recommending COVID-19 shots for anyone, instead leaving the choice up to the individual. Approval of updated shots also came several weeks later than usual. Pfizer said that also hurt sales (*MedPage Today*).

**CALIFORNIA:** The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health recently confirmed the first West Nile Virus death of the year in a resident of San Fernando Valley, who was hospitalized and died from neurologic illness following a severe West Nile virus infection (*Los Angeles County Health Dept. news release*).

**AMERICA:** ByHeart, a maker of organic baby formula, has expanded a voluntary recall to include all of its products sold nationwide after federal health regulators found botulism infections in two additional infants, bringing the number of reported cases to 15. The expanded recall was announced days after the FDA told caregivers to stop using two batches of ByHeart's powdered Whole Nutrition Infant Formula after health agencies found an increase in the number of botulism infections in infants who had consumed it (*The New York Times*).

**UTAH:** Southern Utah has become the epicenter of measles activity in the United States in the past 2 months, but Salt Lake County had not reported any infections. Now Salt Lake County may have one. A county resident is likely the area's first case of measles but has declined to be tested, or to fully participate in our disease investigation (*CIDRAP*).

**AMERICA:** Adults with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or recurrent major depressive disorder—especially those who are older, black or Hispanic, have chronic conditions, have public health insurance, or were hospitalized during infection—are at elevated risk for long COVID. A study by a Weill Cornell Medicine researcher was based on the EHRs of more than 1.6 million COVID-19 patients aged 21 years and older from 30

days to 6 months after infection (*JAMA Network Open*).

**TEXAS:** The Department of State Health Services (DSHS) this week said provisional data show a significant increase in pertussis (whooping cough) cases this year. The state had more than 3,500 reported pertussis cases through October, a fourfold increase from the same period last year. Approximately 85% of the cases have occurred in children (*Texas DSHS health alert*).

**NIGERIA & NEW GUINEA:** Polio – Nigeria confirmed a cVDPV2 case in Kaduna province with onset of paralysis, bringing its total number of cases this year to 45. Papua New Guinea reported a case in Morobe province with paralysis onset raising its 2025 cVDPV2 total to 5 cases. GPEI also noted that 2 billion doses of novel oral polio vaccine type 2 have now been administered around the world (*Global Polio Eradication Initiative*).

**CANADA:** Another recall has been issued in a Canadian *Salmonella* outbreak linked to pistachios and pistachio-containing products. The recall of non-branded Dubai-style chocolate sold at Juice Dudez locations in Canada brings the total number of items recalled in the outbreak to 48. The Public Health Agency of Canada says the outbreak has sickened 117 people, 17 of whom have been hospitalized (*Food Safety News*).

**AMERICA:** You have heard by now that the Trump administration has brokered a deal with Eli Lilly and Novo Nordisk to offer their breakthrough weight-loss medications at steep discounts for certain Medicare and Medicaid patients. What you may not have heard is that the deal also includes lower prices for GLP-1 drugs for Americans who use cash to buy them through a new government website, expected to debut next year, that will allow people to buy drugs directly from companies. (*Politico*).

**AMERICA:** As birds fly south for the winter, they're carrying with them some unwelcome cargo: the H5N1 virus, or bird flu. In the past 30 days, the virus has

struck 66 poultry flocks, leading to the deaths of more than 3.5 million turkeys,

chickens and ducks, a steep increase compared to the summer months. The virus can spread easily when infected wild birds mix with commercial or backyard flocks. (*NPR*).

**U.K. & CANADA:** As flu season gets underway, global health experts are increasingly worried about a new strain of the virus that popped up in June — four months after the makeup of this year's flu shots had been decided. The new strain, a version of H3N2, is causing outbreaks in Canada and the U.K., where health officials are warning about the early wave that's sending people to the hospital (*NBC News*).

**AMERICAN:** One of the largest studies ever conducted on the link between the shingles vaccine and brain health offers insight into how the disease increases dementia risk. The study found people who experienced multiple episodes of shingles had a higher risk of dementia for several years after the second outbreak compared with those who had it only once. (*The Washington Post*).

**THE WORLD:** Children with the skin condition atopic dermatitis (AD, or eczema) who are vaccinated against COVID-19 may experience fewer related infections and allergic complications. This new research was presented at the recent American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology Annual Scientific Meeting in Florida (*CIDRAP*).

**EUROPE:** Infection with the mpox virus (MPXV) confers strong immunity against future infection for up to two years, compared with vaccine-conferred protection. Researchers in Belgium and the Netherlands reported last week the vaccine wanes with time and requires boosting (*The Lancet Infectious Diseases*).

### **COVID-19, 11/13/2025**

**World Total Cases**  
778,885,759

**World Total Deaths**  
7,103,253

**U.S. Total Deaths**  
1,228,289

World Health Organization

## Provider-led I-SNPs Provide Mixed Results

Researchers examined long-stay residents in nearly 18,000 nursing homes, 1,265 of which started a provider-led I-SNP plans.

Plans get a capitated payment to cover the costs of caring for each beneficiary in an I-SNP.

They found that starting a provider-led I-SNP spiked enrollment in MA plans by 17% over other nursing homes. Additionally, facilities offering their own plans frequently had 50% or more of their long-stay residents enrolled in an I-SNP.

The study found that provider-led I-SNPs did reduce hospitalizations by one percent. Mortality, falls and physical restraint use also were reduced nominally, though not enough to be statistically significant.

*Health Services Research 11/09/2025*

## 450+ Urge Policymakers to Enact Fix for Telehealth

Congress has extended telehealth flexibilities multiple times immediately prior to looming deadlines. Unfortunately, failure to do so this year has led to an abrupt end to telehealth services for millions of Medicare beneficiaries.

In a letter to Congressional leaders, over 450 organizations spanning health care providers, digital health innovators, patient and provider advocacy organizations urged Congress to immediately act on a long-term telehealth fix in its next legislative package.

The organizations said they seek to ensure stability and provide clarity for patients, providers and the health care system as a whole.

*Alliance for Connected Care, 11/04/2025*

## Dementia Patients Less Likely To Get Palliative Care

Using Medicare Advantage administrative claims, researchers examined 343 beneficiaries evaluated for palliative care eligibility between July 2022 and December 2023.

Roughly half of these beneficiaries were deemed eligible for palliative care. Beneficiaries with dementia had a lower chance, on average, of receiving palliative care.

Beneficiaries with cancer, cardiovascular disease, COPD and end-stage kidney disease had a higher average likelihood of being referred to palliative care.

Those receiving pain assistance or dyspnea management, and those who had experienced an emergency department visit, hospitalization or nursing home stay were all referred to palliative care more often than the average beneficiary.

*American Journal of Managed Care, November 2025*

## Creditors Looking to Direct Guardian Bankruptcy

A group of companies owed money by Guardian Elder Care has asked a court to end delays and allow them the chance to chart the skilled nursing chain's bankruptcy reorganization.

Guardian is currently seeking a sixth extension in the case, but a committee of creditors argues the company has not been working to negotiate a consensual agreement. They described the process as essentially "idle."

The creditors committee told the court Nov. 5 that Guardian hasn't substantively responded to their proposed bankruptcy structure presented in January. They want the judge to force movement by ending exclusive rights to plan the exit.

*McKnight's, 11/09/2025*

## Older Population Unsure Of What Aging Will Bring

The share of US adults ages 65 and older has jumped from 12.4% in 2004 to 18% in 2024, driven in part by longer life expectancy, fewer births and aging of the baby boomers.

Nearly half of adults 65+ (49%) say they are aging extremely or very well. In contrast, only 30% under 65 believe they will age that well.

Money plays a major role in perception. About 61% of older adults in the highest income group say they are aging very well compared with 51% in the middle-income

group and 39% of those with lower incomes.

*HealthDay News, 11/07/2025*

## ONE COLUMN

### Getting Millions in Extra \$\$\$ But Providing Bad Care

Through a little-known federal funding stream, Utah nursing homes owned by cities or counties are eligible for additional taxpayer dollars meant to improve the quality of care for the elderly and disabled residents who live or stay there.

It all adds up to big money. Over the last decade, state records show nursing homes participating in the Upper Payment Limit program have received \$1 billion in federal funds they wouldn't have otherwise gotten.

But despite all that extra money, a new analysis of publicly available federal data — commissioned by a local law firm — found that, since 2017, the quality of care at these facilities has been worse than at nursing homes that aren't getting all that extra money — with lower overall ratings and staffing scores and more deficiencies in surveys.

Both the nursing home industry and the Utah Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) have pushed back on the analysis, which they say is not based on an "apples-to-apples comparison."

Some patients have complained about poor quality care at facilities that are part of the program, and as federal inspection reports continue to highlight problems within them.

One nursing home that's received \$26 million through the program since 2016 has been named as a Special Focus Facility, meaning it has been identified as having a pattern of persistent and pervasive care issues.

Twelve other government-owned facilities that receive extra money currently have a special alert on CMS' Care Compare website, warning consumers that each one has been "cited for potential issues related to abuse."

Four of those nursing homes are on the list of candidates to receive additional oversight from federal regulators.

## A Done-Deal: West Virginia's Sale of State-Owned SNFs

After many years of attempts by the West Virginia Legislature to sell one or all four of the state's publicly owned long-term care facilities, those hospitals are now in private hands.

Gov. Patrick Morrisey announced the sale of all four facilities was finalized.

The buyer is MGD. The company agreed to pay the state \$60 million in cash combined with an \$80 million ancillary consideration component.

The additional \$80 million will cover operational losses during the transition period.

The facilities will be managed by subsidiary Majestic Care, a long-term care company with facilities in Indiana, Michigan and Ohio.

*The Journal, 11/03/2025*

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*American Journal of Managed Care, November 2025*

## Most Concerned about LTC But Few Talking About It

Research from Lincoln Financial highlights a widespread concern among

Americans about the cost and impact of long-term care.

According to Lincoln's Consumer Sentiment Tracker, conducted in October, 82% of respondents report feeling concerned about paying for long-term care services for themselves or a family member, and nearly half (42%) say they are highly concerned.

Yet, despite this widespread concern, long-term care remains largely undiscussed in financial planning conversations.

Only 21% say they've discussed long-term care planning with their financial professionals.

Just 14% have talked about long-term care insurance, and only 7% have discussed elder care planning.

*Lincoln Financial news release, 11/04/2025*

## GLP-1 Drugs Reduce Risk Of Heart Disease & Stroke

In a November study presented at the American Heart Association Scientific Sessions 2025, researchers found that GLP-1 drugs *tirzepatide* and *semaglutide* may offer increased protection against heart attack, stroke and death from any cause.

Researchers examined the effectiveness of *tirzepatide* and *semaglutide* in patients with elevated cardiovascular risk, including obesity and type 2 diabetes, enrolled in insurance programs in the United States between 2018 and 2025.

Results demonstrated that, compared with *sitagliptin*, semaglutide reduced the risk of stroke and heart attack by 18%. Additionally, *tirzepatide* decreased the risk of stroke, heart attack and death by 13% compared to *dulaglutide*.

*McKnight's Clinical Health, 11/11/2025*

*"Old age is like everything else. To make a success of it, you've got to start young."*

Theodore Roosevelt

## Briefly in the News

Financial well-being can have an outsize imprint on older Americans' quality of life, affecting their physical health, social life and even cognitive skills, new research shows. Low-income seniors are more likely to experience mental confusion, spend less time pursuing hobbies, and face difficulties with everyday tasks such as climbing stairs and grocery shopping, compared with their more affluent counterparts, and just 21% are highly confident of having enough money in retirement (**Pew Research Center**).

Cigna is joining forces with basketball legend Earvin "Magic" Johnson to support mental health using the power of music. The insurer and Johnson will release a collaborative album later this month titled "Magic Sounds," which includes multiple tracks to support relaxation, focus and stress management (**Fierce Healthcare**).

The Department of Veterans Affairs has confirmed it is expanding psychedelic-assisted therapy trials for veterans diagnosed with PTSD, treatment resistant depression, and anxiety disorders. Nine VA facilities, in the Bronx, Los Angeles, Omaha, Palo Alto, Portland (Oregon), San Diego, San Francisco, West Haven, and White River Junction, are participating in the multi-year studies, each designed to test the safety and clinical impact of psychedelic compounds used under strict supervision (**Military.com**).

A staffing agency that works with international specialty nurses is suing the Trump administration over an executive order that slaps a \$100,000 price tag on H-1B visa applications. Attorneys for Global Nurse Force argued the fee would force it to close its U.S. operations. (**MedPage Today**).

President Trump has nominated Benjamin Landa to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to Hungary. Landa, co-founder and CEO of the Sentosa Care network of nursing and rehabilitation centers. He is known for his steadfast support of conservative values and his active role in Republican politics. Landa met personally with President Trump in the Oval Office last month to discuss the

role, a move reportedly encouraged by Trump ally Roger Stone (**5TownsCentral**)