

# IN THE NEWS

News for LTC Professionals  
in 100 Words-or-Less

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## They said it

*"I received my flu and COVID-19 vaccines to protect myself and those I love. These vaccines are safe, effective, and remain one of the best tools we have to prevent serious illness"*

Illinois Dept of Health director Dr. Sameer Vohra

*"This is a recipe for disaster [the bankruptcy] for individuals, small businesses, and other entities that are owed hundreds of millions of dollars in unsecured debts"*

Sen. Elizabeth Warren in letter asking a federal agency to oversee bankruptcy of Genesis Healthcare

*"These are not health emergencies. In other words, somebody might have fallen on the ground, and rather than the institution lifting them up themselves, they call the fire department and have the fire department do it"*

Cincinnati City Council member Mark Jeffreys on the city's proposal to charge SNFs for "lift-assist" calls

## **Ammonia Leak – SNFs Among Those Evacuated**

A leaking tanker truck spewed ammonia gas into the air in Weatherford, Oklahoma, forcing hundreds of residents to flee their homes and sending several dozen people to hospitals.

Several nursing homes were evacuated, and schools were closed for the day.

There were no injuries reported among nursing home residents, but 500 to 600 people from the town were housed in emergency shelters.

Hazmat teams and an Oklahoma National Guard emergency response unit worked through the night to contain the gas and monitor air quality. Officials said the leak had been stopped and the air was safe by the next morning.

*Independent Journal Review, 11/13/2025*

## **Trump Pardons Schwartz - Head of Skyline Fiasco**

President Trump has pardoned Joseph Schwartz, the third upper-echelon nursing home executive convicted of multimillion dollar crimes Trump has set free.

Schwartz was sentenced in April to three years in prison after admitting to defrauding the IRS of nearly \$39 million in payroll tax funds.

The sentence handed down by a New Jersey federal judge also included a \$100,000 fine and \$5 million in restitution. All are negated by Trump's pardon.

Schwartz quickly grew his Skyline chain to 95 facilities in 11 states before being indicted in 2022. The Skyline debacle affected about 7,000 residents and 15,000 employees.

*McKnight's, 11/16/2025*

## **SNFs Turn to Baby Dolls to Soothe Alzheimer's Patients**

Alzheimer's disease not only robs patients of their memory, but most will experience anxiety or become agitated as it progresses.

One solution to help soothe these troubling symptoms is an emerging field called "doll therapy."

For some, the sight of an older adult holding a doll could be confusing or even concerning. It's part of a program called baby doll therapy.

Studies on baby doll therapy are limited, but research conducted in the U.K. found that people with dementia who used doll therapy were less irritable, it reduced the need for medication and there was less evidence of depression.

*WAFB-TV, 11/14/2025*

## **Nothing's New Under the Sun**

At my first nursing home job almost 37 years ago, I noticed several residents holding baby dolls. When I inquired, the nurses said the baby dolls elicited a calming effect on those residents. I bet many of you had the same experience. Of course, we didn't call it "baby doll therapy." We didn't have a name for it. We simply used it because it worked - **Drew**

## **Senator seeks intervention in Genesis Bankruptcy**

Sen. Elizabeth Warren, a long-time critic of private equity investment in healthcare, has asked a federal watchdog to determine if Genesis Healthcare and company insiders are exploiting the Chapter 11 process.

Warren wrote to the acting director of the Executive Office for US Trustees, which is tasked with ensuring the integrity of the US bankruptcy system.

Bids to buy Genesis are set to be opened Dec. 10.

As of now, the only known party interested in acquiring the provider and its assets is ReGen, a private equity firm already heavily invested in the 18-state, 175-nursing home conglomerate.

*McKnight's 11/16/2025*

## **Virginia Board Member Comes Down Hard on Profits**

The Nursing Home Oversight and Accountability Advisory Board – state advisors working to improve Virginia's nursing homes, protect residents and hold the industry accountable to delivering better care.

Consumer advocate Joanna Heiskill – a board member – presented to the panel recently. She implored the board to address what she believes is the root cause of declining quality of care: profit seeking.

"To allow corporations to purchase and operate these homes as profit-driven enterprises is wrong, because what happens is you have profit over quality of health," Heiskill said. "This is how we got here."

*WTVR-TV, 11/14/2025*

## **Study: SNFs Underused For Stroke Rehab**

More approximately 35% of patients received no post-acute care after being hospitalized for stroke. But 28% were sent to inpatient rehabilitation facilities, within 10 days; 24% admitted directly to a SNF after hospitalization; and another 13% referred directly to home care.

*JAMDA, November 2025*

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

**AMERICA:** A phase 1 randomized controlled trial of an experimental intranasal vaccine against multiple H5N1 avian flu strains generated a broad immune response in US adults. The findings come the same day as the Mexican Ministry of Health reported the death of a 3-year-old Durango girl from H5N1 infection, highlighting the need for prevention. (*Nature Communications*).

**AMERICA & CANADA:** Canada has lost its measles elimination status, after failing to curb an outbreak of the virus for 12 consecutive months. Because Canada is no longer deemed measles-free, the Americas region as a whole has lost its elimination status, although individually the other countries are still considered to have stamped out the disease. The US, however, risks losing its status as well if it does not stop an ongoing outbreak by January (*BBC*).

**LOUISIANA:** The Department of Health has confirmed one case of measles in an adult resident in Region 9, which includes Livingston, St. Helena, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa and Washington parishes. The patient was exposed during international travel. The individual was not hospitalized and will remain in isolation until no longer infectious. The vaccination status of the person is unknown (*WVUE-TV*).

**SOUTH AFRICA:** Scientists may have uncovered an important aspect of long covid. Recent research appears to show that the blood of these patients often contains unusual clusters of microscopic material. Those with the chronic condition had a greater amount of microclots combined with web-like structures called neutrophil extracellular traps (NETs). The findings could help doctors better identify long covid cases and might even help explain some of the symptoms these patients experience (*Gizmodo*).

**AMERICA:** In a study, led by Massachusetts General Hospital researchers, the risk of Long COVID was 20.7% in unvaccinated participants and 13.3% in vaccinated youth. The risk of long-term symptoms was 36% lower in vaccinated participants. COVID-19

vaccination can lower the risk of long COVID by preventing infection, reducing disease severity, and perhaps by mitigating the longer-term pathophysiologic response to infection (*Vaccine*).

**ENGLAND:** The British Medical Association and the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) have written to work and pensions secretary Pat McFadden urging the government to "act quickly" to provide support to the many doctors and nurses, and their families, who experienced serious financial losses as a result of contracting COVID-19 in the workplace and then developing long COVID (*BMJ*).

**TAMPA:** A pharmacy has agreed to pay over \$17 million after it allegedly submitted false claims to Medicare for over-the-counter COVID-19 tests. The Department of Justice Middle District of Florida said VRA Enterprises, LLC dba Precision Rx did not provide the COVID tests to beneficiaries or sent them months after billing Medicare between August 2022 and May 2023. VRA submitted approximately 136,491 claims to Medicare for over-the-counter COVID-19 tests it did not ship to beneficiaries until April 2023 (*WFLA-TV*).

**ILLINOIS:** Dr. Sameer Vohra, Director of the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), received his annual flu and COVID-19 immunizations this fall respiratory season during a visit to the DuPage County Health Department this week. The Director also spoke on the importance of receiving these seasonal immunizations and the steps IDPH has taken to encourage Illinois residents to get their shots and to preserve access to them (*Illinois.gov*).

**MIAMI:** Scott Lee Huss, a popular social media influencer and singer, has been sentenced to more than two years in federal prison for orchestrating a years-long fraud scheme that began with fraudulent Paycheck Protection Program loans totaling \$600,000. Instead of using the money for payroll and business expenses, Huss used COVID-19 relief loans to pay for cryptocurrency and luxury cars (*DOJ news release*).

**WASHINGTON STATE:** An individual a coastal county has preliminarily tested positive for H5N1 avian influenza. If confirmed, it will be the first human bird flu case in the U.S. since February. The patient is an older adult from Grays Harbor County with underlying health conditions. The person was hospitalized after developing a high fever, confusion, and respiratory distress in early November and continues to receive treatment (*Washington State Health Department*).

**CANADA:** After 12 months of prolonged transmission that began in New Brunswick and took hold in Ontario and Alberta, Canada today lost its measles elimination status, as designated by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), which is part of the World Health Organization. By default, the Americas region, which had obtained measles elimination status, also lost that designation (*CIDRAP*).

**BALTIMORE:** As part of a class called "Winter is Coming" at the children's hospital, nurses put on oxygen masks for five minutes as respiratory therapists adjusted the fit and pressure. The exercise encouraged staff to empathize with their young patients who may need to wear them to provide enough oxygen to lungs suffering from flu or COVID-19 this winter (*The Baltimore Sun*).

**UTAH & S. CAROLINA:** State officials report 84 measles cases in the state in its weekly update, an increase of 10 since last week. All 10 of the new cases come from southwest Utah, where there are now 68 cases. South Carolina has five new cases bringing its total to 52 cases, 49 of which have been in Spartanburg County (*CIDRAP*).

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

**World Total Cases**  
778,900,250

**World Total Deaths**  
7,103,247

**U.S. Total Deaths**  
1.2+ Million

World Health Organization

## MA Enrollment Grows 183% in 12 Years

Enrollment in Medicare Advantage (MA) among nursing home long-stay residents increased by 183% from 2010 to 2023.

Researchers calculated the prevalence of MA enrollment for long-and-short stay nursing home residents and all other Medicare beneficiaries and compared variation of MA growth at the state level between long-stay residents and the general Medicare population.

Additionally, disenrollment for MA increased sharply as beneficiaries entered nursing homes for long-term care. The average age of MA beneficiaries was 85.4 in 2011 and 80.2 in 2023, while 61.4% of MA facilities were run for profit in 2011 compared to 72.9% in 2023.

*Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, November 2025*

## AG's Probe of SNF Collections Survives Quash Ploy

New York Attorney General Letitia James is looking into a Long Island-based law firm's practice of suing the relatives and friends of residents to collect on bills, including after the nursing home resident had died.

The AG issued a subpoena in 2024 ordering Abrams Fensterman to hand over documents involving third parties the firm sued on behalf of a nursing home attempting to collect a resident's debt.

The law firm refused to deliver the documents calling the AG's action a "fishing expedition" and sought to quash the subpoena. The Manhattan Supreme Court, however, ruled the subpoena was still valid.

*Courthouse News Service, 11/12/2025*

## Another LTC CEO Headed to the 'Big House'

Kevin Breslin, former chief executive officer of KBWB-Atrium Health and Senior Living this week was sentenced to 90 months in prison and ordered to pay \$146 million in restitution and \$8.4 million in forfeiture.

Breslin pleaded guilty to diverting for personal expenses CMS funds intended

for the operation, management, maintenance, and care of the residents at KBWB-Atrium's 23 Wisconsin facilities

The defendants diverted money from resident accounts, employee 401(k) accounts, health insurance premiums,

Atrium did not pay vendors and diverted employee tax withholding funds which caused employees to file inaccurate tax returns.

*DOJ news release, 11/18/2025*

## PACS OK with SEC, Reports Record Revenue

After missing SEC deadlines on several required quarterly filings, PACS Group has reported third quarter revenues of \$1.34 billion, an increase of 31% over the prior year.

The company had "record" revenues of \$3.93 billion, an increase of 36.4% over the prior year third quarter.

PACS also reported that it had a healthy 94.8% occupancy rate at mature facilities.

The information is of interest because PACS value had fallen, and its fate as a public company questioned due to those missed deadlines.

PACS has also caught up the quarterly reports it missed.

*McKnight's, 11/20/2025*

## Cincinnati May Charge Nursing Homes for Lift-Assist

Cincinnati City Council is considering charging nursing homes and long-term care facilities up to \$1,000 each time they call the fire department for non-emergency lift assistance.

The Cincinnati Fire Department responds to approximately 1,600 "lift assist" calls annually from institutional facilities, according to the city motion. These calls typically involve firefighters helping residents who have fallen or need assistance getting up from chairs or beds, with no medical treatment required.

One council member Jeff Cramerding is backing the proposal, viewing it as both a revenue opportunity and a way to identify facilities that may not be providing adequate care.

*WCPO-TV, 11/13/2025*

## ONE COLUMN

### Medicaid Spending and Enrollment – Part 1

States are facing a more tenuous fiscal climate due to slowing revenue growth and increasing spending demands in state fiscal year (FY) 2026. Recent shifts in economic conditions as well as recent federal actions, including cuts to safety net programs and tax code changes in the recently passed reconciliation law (H.R.1), changes to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) enhanced Marketplace subsidies, federal workforce cuts, and tariff changes, contribute to further fiscal uncertainty for states, though fiscal conditions and the impact of federal changes vary across states.

For Medicaid, states are navigating the new "normal" for their programs following the expiration of pandemic-era policies while contending with shifts in state fiscal conditions and longer-term fiscal uncertainty.

The Medicaid provisions in H.R.1 are estimated to reduce federal Medicaid spending by \$911 billion (or by 14%) over a decade and increase the number of uninsured people by 7.5 million, though the impacts vary by state with spending cuts ranging from 4% to almost one-fifth of all federal Medicaid spending in some states.

While many provisions in the new law, including some of the largest sources of federal Medicaid savings such as work requirements and financing changes, do not take effect until FY 2027 or later, many states noted they were anticipating the new law's implementation and impact.

Leading up to FY 2026, states experienced significant changes in Medicaid spending and enrollment trends. For a three-year period following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, states provided continuous Medicaid enrollment in exchange for enhanced federal funding, resulting in record high Medicaid enrollment, declines in the uninsured rate, and shifts in Medicaid spending.

*KFF Health News, 11/13/2025*

## Next Week Part 2 Enrollment and Spending

## **California High Court Upholds SNF LGBT Law**

The California Supreme Court has rejected a First Amendment challenge to a state law that protects the rights of gay and transgender people in nursing homes and forbids employees of those sites from using the wrong pronouns to address a resident or coworker.

The ruling holds that violations of the LGBT Long-Term Care Residents' Bill of Rights are not protected by the First Amendment because they relate to codes of conduct in what is effectively both a workplace and a home.

the seven-member court ruled that, "The pronouns provision constitutes a regulation of discriminatory conduct that incidentally affects speech."

Q Voice, 11/15/2025

## **Nurse Who Wasn't Worked at a SNF, a Jail and a Hospital**

A New Orleans woman faces multiple charges of impersonating a health care worker and issuing prescriptions after allegedly working at University Medical Center, Lafon Nursing Facility and Orleans Justice Center without a nursing license.

New Orleans police arrested 32-year-old Shakeenya Cooper who allegedly worked at medical facilities in New Orleans for nearly a year without valid credentials or licenses.

The warrant alleges that investigators received a credible tip that Cooper had a falsified employment history and used a fake registered nurse number on her résumé to secure the various jobs.

WVUE-TV, 11/15/2025

## **Fake SNF Nurse Off to The Graybar Hotel**

A Baltimore woman has been sentenced to 38 months in federal prison for impersonating nurses and aggravated identity theft.

From September 2019 through August 2023, Thomasina E. Amponsah, 51, who never possessed a nursing license or credential, used stolen nursing licenses to

secure employment as an RN or LPN in nursing homes in the Baltimore area.

Officials stated that she also fabricated educational and professional histories, which enabled her to work as a licensed nurse in at least 40 facilities, earning more than \$145,000 in wages from her employment at these facilities using her false credentials.

WBFF-TV, 11/13/2025

## **More Measles – U.S. May Lose Elimination Status**

CDC officials said on a call with state health officials that the U.S. could lose its measles elimination status in January.

Though the West Texas measles outbreak that began in January and resulted in nearly 750 infections was declared over in August, the strain that caused the outbreak has been seeded and is circulating in parts of the United States, which puts the elimination status at risk.

CDC officials publicly linked the measles strain seen in West Texas to the ongoing Utah-Arizona outbreak. Currently the country has 1,723 measles cases, and 87% of confirmed cases are part of an outbreak.

The New York Times, 11/18/2025

## **World's Healthiest Countries Ain't the Richest**

Wealth alone doesn't make a nation healthy, according to new collaborative research from the University of Surrey and its international partners.

The survey ranked 38 OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries on their progress toward global health goals. The study shows that some of the world's wealthiest nations, including the United States and Canada, lag behind smaller economies in achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 3 – ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all.

Countries such as Iceland, Japan and Norway lead the way, supported by robust health systems and equitable access to care.

Annals of Operations Research, November 2025

## **Briefly in the News**

People with type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM) have a significantly higher risk of hearing loss. A study examined 3,910 individuals diagnosed with diabetes and 4,084 who did not have T2DM. Across nine studies, the prevalence of HL among participants with T2DM ranged between 40.6% to 71.9% (*Otolaryngology–Head and Neck Surgery*).

Concerns have been raised around whether calcium supplements increase dementia risk. In a post-hoc analysis of a five-year double-blind, placebo-controlled randomized trial of calcium supplements for primary fracture prevention to evaluate the long-term risk for dementia in older women, the indication is that calcium supplements do not increase the likelihood of dementia (*The Lancet*).

The Trump administration has named Richard Pazdur, a longtime oncology expert at the FDA as the nation's top drug regulator. Pazdur will lead the agency's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research, which regulates over-the-counter medicines and most prescription drugs. He replaces George Tidmarsh, who federal officials say resigned after being placed on leave over allegations that he misused his authority (*The Washington Post*).

Duke Health researchers recently announced groundbreaking results from a clinical trial that began over two decades ago. A small group of women with advanced breast cancer participated in a trial where they received a vaccine. All are alive today, with robust, long-lasting immune cells that recognize their cancer. Lori Lober, a study participant initially, was given a grim prognosis, with median survival rate of less than 2% to 3% for five years. She has remained disease-free for 24 years (*WTVD-TV*).

GoodRx has become the latest company to offer a telehealth weight loss program. The program connects consumers with clinicians who can prescribe GLP-1 weight loss drugs. On top of access to popular GLP-1 drugs such as Novo Nordisk's Wegovy or Eli Lilly's Zepbound, the program includes ongoing clinical support to track a user's progress and potential side effects, the company said (*Modern Healthcare*).