

IN THE NEWS

News for LTC Professionals
in 100 Words-or-Less

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They said it

"They've really been bound to a hospital design model from the 1960s and 1970s"

Charlie Sabatton, a consultant on aging and law and immediate past director of the American Bar Association's Commission on Law and Aging commenting on so few SNFs had adopted the small house concept

"Very thankful. Very thankful. Yes, very much so. Thankful to everybody here"

Kerri Trask, whose mother was one of 102 residents safely evacuated after a fire at Webster Park Rehabilitation and Healthcare Center in Rockland, Massachusetts

"With the holidays approaching, these prolonged confinement requirements force our elders to remain isolated in their rooms for ten days, causing unnecessary emotional and social hardship"

LeadingAge South Carolina President and CEO Kassie South wrote to President Trump and CMS Administrator Mehmet Oz.

HHS Dumps Nursing Home Staffing Mandate

The Department of Health and Human Services has repealed key provisions of the minimum staffing standards for long-term care facilities finalized in 2024.

HHS said it was repealing provisions in alignment with the OBBA which imposed a nine-year moratorium on the rule's staffing measures.

The 2024 staffing rule required a minimum of 3.48 daily nursing, including at least 0.55 RN hours and 2.45 CNAs hours PPD; and an RN onsite 24/7 - an element that appeared impossible with the nation facing a chronic RN shortage through at least 2030.

Federal Register, 12/02/2025

Five Star Revision - Staffing Or Surveys More Important

MedPAC is reviewing two proposed alternatives to the Five-Star Quality Rating System methodology, in which only 4% to 5% of nursing homes would earn the top 5-star rating. Far fewer facilities than now would also land in the 1-star category.

In the first model, the three domains of staffing, health inspection and quality measures each receive equal weight. In the second, the staffing score accounts for 60% of a nursing home's overall rating, with the other two domains weighed at 20% each.

In those models 88% to 92% of all nursing homes would earn 2- 3- or 4-star ratings.

McKnight's, 12/04/2025

Atrium Ex-CEO Headed For 7½ Years in the Slammer

Kevin Breslin, of Hoboken, New Jersey, the former CEO of Wisconsin nursing home chain Atrium Health and Senior Living was sentenced to 7.5 years in federal prison and ordered to pay \$146 million in restitution to victims of the fraudulent scheme.

Atrium's nearly two dozen nursing homes were placed in receivership in 2018 after the scheme began to unravel. Employee paychecks bounced and vendors went unpaid even as owners were cashing in.

Breslin will begin serving his sentence Feb. 3, 2026.

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 12/05/2025

Pardoned by Trump but He Still Owes Ark. Cash/Time

Joseph Schwartz, the New Jersey nursing home magnate convicted in a \$38 million fraud scheme was pardoned last month by President Trump.

But presidential pardons only erase federal sentences, not state ones. Schwartz still owes time and money in Arkansas.

Schwartz walked free on Nov. 14 after serving only three months of a three-year federal sentence.

On Monday, Arkansas Attorney General Tim Griffin asked the circuit court in Pulaski County to order Schwartz to the Ouachita River Correctional Unit in Malvern for a 31-day stint until he is eligible for state parole.

Arkansas Times, 12/02/2025

Some States Not Waiting On CMS re: 'Prior Auths'

At least 18 states took action on health insurers' use of prior authorization this year, a sign that lawmakers aren't content to wait on federal regulators to step in on a key consumer and provider issue.

The authors looked at a rule that will be effective in 2027 that will outline when prior authorizations may be required and documentation needed.

That same rule requires MA plans to answer authorization requests within seven days, or as little as 72 hours in expedited cases.

But some states have new Laws that require insurers to process urgent requests within 24 to 72 hours.

McKnight's, 12/01/2025

Holidays Coming - A Push for Reduced COVID Isolation

A group of skilled nursing providers is asking the president to step in and quickly lift lengthy isolation periods for COVID-positive residents ahead of the coming holiday season.

LeadingAge South Carolina, echoing concerns previously raised by its parent organization, sent a letter to President Trump asking for an executive order to end a 10-day isolation rule that dates to summer of 2024.

CEO Kassie South's letter also calls on the agencies to immediately withdraw isolation requirements "so that our elders can regain their freedom of movement without delay."

McKnight's, 12/01/2025

"Never underestimate someone who overestimates themselves"

~ Paul Anka

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

ATLANTA: During a contentious meeting dominated by racial innuendo and anti-vaccine talking points, advisers to the CDC voted to delay a decision on whether to recommend scaling back infant vaccinations for hepatitis B, a virus that kills 1.1 million people around the world each year. Several ACIP members asked for the postponement after complaining that they hadn't been given sufficient time to consider the wording of the proposal (*CIDRAP*).

WASHINGTON, D.C: FDA Commissioner Marty Makary claimed the Biden administration withheld data from the public on the risks of myocarditis from the COVID vaccine, — a bold accusation that clashes with years of public statements from federal health officials. Myocarditis, an inflammation of the heart muscle, is a known, albeit small, risk of the mRNA COVID vaccines (*NBC News*).

AMERICA: In an article published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 12 former FDA commissioners sharply criticized anticipated changes to vaccine policy that were detailed in a leaked memo from an agency official. The former commissioners wrote, "We are deeply concerned by sweeping new F.D.A. assertions about vaccine safety and proposals that would undermine a regulatory model designed to ensure that vaccines are safe, effective and available when the public needs them most" (*The New York Times*).

AMERICA: The CDC confirmed **30 more** measles cases in the U.S. this past week, raising the national total to 1,828 confirmed cases so far in 2025. Current hot spots are Utah, Arizona, and South Carolina, where outbreaks among predominately unvaccinated or under-vaccinated people have led to community spread and widespread quarantines at schools. There have been 46 outbreaks in the U.S. in 2025 (*CIDRAP*).

WASHINGTON, D.C: The chair of a federal vaccine advisory committee, himself a well-known vaccine critic, will be moving to an official role at HHS. Martin

Kulldorff was appointed to be chief science officer for the Office of the

Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE). Kulldorff, a Swedish biostatistician, served as chair of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) at the CDC earlier this year after HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. fired and remade the entire committee with many known vaccine skeptics and critics (*The Hill*).

WASHINGTON, D.C: Dr. Vinay Prasad, director of the FDA's vaccine division told staff in a memo that an internal review found that at least 10 children died "after and because of receiving" the Covid vaccine. However, experts who reviewed the memo say it is misusing information from an unverified reporting system that allows anyone to submit entries about adverse events they believe are linked to vaccines (*NBC NEWS*).

COLORADO: The University of Colorado Anschutz will pay more than \$10 million to settle a lawsuit brought by students and staff who sued in 2021 after being denied religious exemptions to the campus's COVID-19 vaccination mandate. Thomas More Society which represents plaintiffs in religious liberty cases nationwide, called it one of the only cases in the country where plaintiffs have received money damages in a lawsuit over a COVID vaccination mandate (*Colorado Sun*).

SWEDEN: A large, case-control study from Sweden finds that people with long COVID have higher rates of depression, anxiety, fatigue, and headache both before and after diagnosis. The findings draw on medical records from more than 53,000 adults and suggest a link between long COVID and preexisting conditions (*BMC Medicine*).

AMERICA: In the CDC's latest FluView, flu activity remains low but is increasing nationwide, particularly among children and young adults. Outpatient visits and hospitalizations for flu have risen in recent weeks. In the week ending Nov. 22, the U.S. reported 3,264 flu-related

hospitalizations, marking a 39% increase from the week prior. (*Becker's Hospital Review*).

THE WORLD: For decades, measles vaccination has been a global success story. The WHO reports deaths from measles dropped 88% around the world from 2000 to 2024 with an estimated 58 million lives saved during that time. But now 59 countries reported large or disruptive measles outbreaks last year, almost triple the number reported in 2021 prompting a WHO report to state, "Global measles elimination remains a distant goal" (*CNN*).

AMERICA: The CDC reports there have been 1,798 confirmed measles cases in the US this year, the highest number of cases since the country reached elimination status in 2000. "Measles remains the world's most contagious virus," WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said. (*CNN*).

THE WORLD: Globally, more than 30 million children were under-protected against measles in 2024. However, recently Cabo Verde, Seychelles and Mauritius became the first countries in the African region to achieve measles elimination this year. Twenty-one Pacific island countries also eliminated measles and rubella this year (*CNN*).

THE WORLD: The WHO released a roadmap to address rising resistance to treatments for HIV, hepatitis B and C, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Building on the WHO's Global Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance, the integrated drug resistance action framework proposes a unified global approach to prevent the emergence and spread of drug resistance (*WHO*).

COVID-19, 12/03/2025

World Total Cases
778,941,947

World Total Deaths
7,103,414

U.S. Total Deaths
1.2+ Million

World Health Organization

Gender Healthcare Wage Gaps Shrunk After COVID-19

Researchers found that CNAs saw the largest wage gains, with earnings rising 13.6% between 2015 and 2024 – significantly more than higher-earning groups.

RNs and technicians saw smaller increases of 3.8% and 1.1%, respectively, while advanced practice providers saw 8.3% wage growth.

Researchers also found that less-educated workers saw faster wage growth than more-educated employees.

Additionally, Black and Hispanic healthcare workers saw faster wage increases than their white and Asian counterparts.

Women's wages grew 8.8% over the study period, compared with 2.1% wage growth for men.

Becker's Hospital Review, 11/18/2025

An End to Antipsych QM? Don't Hold Your Breath

Days after a national report called on CMS to eliminate an antipsychotics quality measure because it limits access to treatment for some dementia patients, the agency signaled the policy was not going away.

CMS said it recognizes that "medications are an integral part of the care provided to residents."

But that "It is also a priority for CMS to investigate instances of inappropriate diagnoses and to curb the overuse of antipsychotic medications in the nation's nursing homes."

Scrutiny ramped up in 2016, when CMS alleged intentional misuse of schizophrenia and other diagnoses to exclude some uses from quality measure calculation.

McKnight's, 11/25/2025

Very Few States Incentivize Small House Concept

Just a dozen states have adopted any kind of incentive for nursing homes converting or designing facilities that embrace the small house model

emphasizing private rooms, communal living and universal workers.

Charlie Sabatino a consultant on aging and law, said research found only six states had begun to prioritize the small house model with quality incentive programs tied to the use of private rooms and/or private bathrooms.

Because they're typically folded into complex quality rate calculations, Sabatino said, those incentives can range from an estimated \$0.50 per resident day up to \$20 to \$30 per resident day in Ohio.

McKnight's, 11/22/2025

SNF Fire! Over 100 Residents Evacuated

All residents were evacuated after a fire at the Webster Park Rehabilitation and Healthcare Center in Rockland, Massachusetts, November 29.

Firefighters arriving at the scene found fire on the third floor of the facility, which was controlled by the building's sprinkler system.

All 102 patients were evacuated, and emergency crews are working with staff to determine where each patient will wind up.

No injuries were reported. Rockland Fire Chief Scott Duffey said about 60 to 70 ambulances in total were used to transport the residents to other nursing facilities.

WBTS-CD, 11/29/2025

Wound Group Will Pay a Ton in False Claims Suit

Even though it maintains it did nothing wrong, one of the nation's largest specialty wound care providers for nursing home patients has settled a False Claims lawsuit for \$45 million.

The DOJ said Vohra Wound Physicians Management and its founder, Ameet Vohra, MD, submitted claims to Medicare "for medically unnecessary surgical procedures, for more lucrative surgical procedures when only routine non-surgical wound management had been done, and for evaluation and management services that were not billable under Medicare."

McKnight's, 11/24/2025

ONE COLUMN

ICE Raids on the Rise Know Your Rights

So-called "ICE raids" are highly focused in healthcare.

"We're seeing increasing enforcement across the nation in a variety of situations," said Kutty Erskine of the law firm Polsinelli. "It can be very challenging if you don't have a plan in place."

"Healthcare is now becoming a focus of ICE action," Erskine noted. To prepare for an investigation, the first step employers should take is to designate a "point person" who will engage with agents if and when they arrive, he said.

"There should be at least one individual, and one backup, that is the primary contact for interactions with the agents while they're present at the facility," he explained "Designate that person, train that person, make sure that that person understands how to interact with the agents. That designated person should have the contact information for your management and for your legal counsel."

Staff members — specifically owners, operators and the designated ICE "point person" — should understand their rights and the rights of ICE agents during an investigation.

ICE must have a judicial warrant to enter private spaces, Erskine noted. Otherwise, they may only enter public areas.

During an ICE raid, managers should refrain from interfering with investigators because improper behavior could be interpreted as obstructing an investigation.

Instead, employers should train their workers ahead of time on how to act if they are interviewed or investigated by federal agents.

"Individuals have the right to choose to speak with investigators, or to choose not to speak to investigators. You have that right. Once an interview has begun, an employee may end that interview at any time and for any reason, simply by saying that they'd like to."

McKnight's HomeCare, 11/09/2025

Healthcare REITs See Largest Yearly Increase in Earnings

Healthcare REITs have reported the largest yearly increase in earnings among all sectors tracked by the National Association of Real Estate Investment Trusts.

Omega Healthcare Investors, Welltower, American Healthcare REIT and National Health Investors led the pack.

Aggregate funds from operations (FFO) across all REITs increased 17.3% year-over-year to \$20.9 billion in the third quarter and increased 5.7% quarter-over-quarter.

Healthcare REITs reported \$7.4 million in FFO in the third quarter, up from \$5.5 million in the second quarter.

Senior Living, 12/01/2025

U.S. and U.K Agree On No Pharmaceutical Tariffs

The U.K. has secured a 0% tariff rate for all medicines exported to the U.S. for at least three years in return for the U.K. spending more on new medicines.

Under the deal, the U.S. agreed to exempt U.K.-origin pharmaceuticals, pharmaceutical ingredients, and medical technology from import taxes.

The administration said in return U.K. drugs firms committed to invest more in the U.S. and create more jobs.

As part of the deal, it said the country's National Health Service will spend around 25% more in new and effective treatments — the first major increase in such spending in over two decades.

Associated Press, 12/01/2025

AI is Coming to the Rescue in New Jersey

The first state-level AI-powered survey intelligence platform in the nation has been launched in a partnership with the Health Care Association of New Jersey and Clearpol.

The new platform enables skilled nursing providers to use CMS Form 2567 survey data to proactively manage risk and improve resident outcomes.

Providers can track facility- and unit-level trends across F-tags, severity and repeat citations; benchmark performance against state and national norms; prioritize key areas like care planning, medication management and infection control; and translate data into exportable dashboards for QAPI mock surveys and board reporting.

Senior Living, 11/17/2025

Insider Wins Bankruptcy Bid for Genesis Healthcare

An insider group more than doubled its original cash bid to win a bankruptcy auction for all of the assets of beleaguered Genesis HealthCare.

Once the largest skilled nursing operator in the US, Genesis' fall has been precipitous. It now operates 175 skilled nursing and assisted living facilities in 18 states and was facing more than \$2 billion in debt when it filed Chapter 11 in July.

CPE 88988 LLC, an affiliate of Genesis private equity owner Pima Capital Partners, raised its initial offer of \$15 million to \$40 million in response to competing bids from two other entities.

McKnight's, 12/02/2025

Top FDA Drug Guy Out One Month After In

Top drug regulator Richard Pazdur has filed papers to retire from the Food and Drug Administration at the end of this month, adding to the agency's turmoil at the top.

Pazdur informed leaders at the FDA's drug center of his intentions on Tuesday, according to two agency sources familiar with the matter.

The move comes less than a month after he took the role of top drug regulator at the urging of FDA Commissioner Marty Makary.

Before his current appointment Pazdur had led the FDA's Division of Oncology Drug Products since 1999.

Stat, 12/02/2025

Briefly in the News

CMS revealed a net savings of 44%, or \$12 billion, from last year's negotiated Medicare spending on 15 drugs used widely to treat cancer and other serious chronic conditions. The Maximum Fair Prices for these 15 drugs will become effective January 1, 2027, bringing the total number of negotiated drugs to 25 when combined with the 10 previously negotiated drugs with MFPs taking effect January 1, 2026 (*CMS*).

While the average age for being diagnosed with heart disease in the United States is typically in the mid-60s for men and early 70s for women, the factors, such as high blood pressure, diabetes and bad cholesterol levels, can start years, sometimes decades, earlier. A new online heart risk calculator could help younger adults learn whether they're likely to develop heart disease, as much as 30 years in the future (*Journal of the American College of Cardiology*).

The trillion-dollar club has become crowded with mostly tech names riding the AI boom. Eli Lilly might soon become a trillion dollar corporation due to the weight-loss bonanza. Its staying power above a \$1 trillion market value will come down to two questions: how quickly it can expand the obesity-drug market and how completely it can dominate it (*The Wall Street Journal*).

Health experts are warning that the Trump administration's new "America First Global Health Strategy" could further damage public health systems already reeling from billions of dollars in foreign aid cuts following the destruction of the US Agency for International Development (USAID), and while some say the new system could bring benefits, there is agreement it marks a radical change in approach from decades of US policy (*CNN*).

Dana-Farber Cancer Institute has been awarded \$20 million from a foundation started by Facebook cofounder Eduardo Saverin and his wife, Elaine. The funding will be used to advance metastatic breast cancer research and care, according to an announcement posted on Dana-Farber's website (*The Boston Globe*).