Top News Stories of the Month, October 2026

Article Summary			
	Category	**#**	**%**
A1	Mission Moments	2	3%
A2	Reimbursement Challenges, Warning Signs, and Implications	11	18%
A3	Competition to be Aware of	4	7%
A4	Workforce Challenges	4	7%
A5	Patient, Family, and Future Customer Demographics and Trends	9	15%
A6	Regulatory and Political	9	15%
A7	Technology and Innovations	1	2%
A8	Speed of Change, Resiliency, and Re-Culture	2	3%
A9	The Human Factor	3	5%
A10	Highlighted Articles of Interest	15	25%
	Totals	**60**	**100%**



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A10 Highlighted Articles of Interest

46 **Value-based care and alternative payment models: What they are and how they work**

Healthcare Financial Management Association (HFMA); by HFMA; 9/20/26

Value-based care (VBC) is an approach to healthcare that seeks to improve the quality, outcomes and experience of care while managing its cost. Rather than rewarding healthcare organizations solely for the volume of services they provide, value-based arrangements link some or all payment to measures of quality, outcomes, utilization or total cost of care.

- What is the difference between value-based care, value-based payment and an APM? ...
- How is value-based care different from fee-for-service? ...
- What does value-based care measure? ...
- How are alternative payment models structured? ...
- [More ...]

47 **Event Recap: NPHI Unites Healthcare Leaders in Washington to Shape the Future of Hospice and Advanced Illness Care**

NPHI press release; by Matt Wilkinson; 10/6/26

The National Partnership for Healthcare and Hospice Innovation (NPHI), the national voice for nonprofit hospice and advanced illness care, brought together members, partners, sponsors and national healthcare leaders from across the country for its 2026 Washington Leadership Conference, held September 30 – October 2 in the nation's capital. The three-day gathering focused on strengthening the quality and integrity of hospice care, advancing innovation and addressing the challenges facing patients, families and providers in a rapidly changing healthcare landscape. The conference featured direct conversations with senior officials from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General (HHS OIG), congressional staff and national healthcare leaders. Discussions covered Medicare policy, program integrity, quality improvement, caregiving, artificial intelligence and new opportunities to expand access to serious illness care.

48 **The future of palliative care starts with better evidence [An interview with Dr. Jean Kutner]**

University of Colorado Anschutz; by Carie Behounek; 7/30/26

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Research is lacking about which palliative care approaches work best for different patients and healthcare settings across the country. Through a $64 million NIH-funded national consortium, CU Anschutz is leading efforts to generate the evidence needed to improve quality of life for people with serious illness, strengthen care delivery across the lifespan and help research findings become standard practice... "Ultimately, we're trying to change practice – or provide the evidence needed to change practice," Jean Kutner, MD, MSPH, said "We have to do this work because people living with serious illness – and the people who care for them – are depending on us to generate the evidence that will make their care better."

49 **What is a professional patient advocate, and why might you need one?**

ArcaMax; by Jennifer Schlinger; 10/6/26

[Patient advocates] understand patients' and families' concerns, ensure their voices are heard by medical staff and interface with care teams, insurance companies and facility administrators. They also coordinate care, set up follow-up appointments and address potential gaps or blind spots in care. I train social workers – who often serve as patient advocates – to help people in a variety of settings, including hospitals and nursing homes. Earlier in my career, I served as a professional patient advocate supporting people in hospitals, home health and hospice. A trained patient advocate can provide much-needed support for people on their healthcare journey. Here's what you need to know to work with one most effectively.

50 **A new question for health system C-suites**

Becker's Hospital Review; by Laura Dyrda; 9/30/26

For years, hospitals across the country aimed to be the one-stop shop for all healthcare needs. They owned every part of the care journey, including hospitals, physician practices, imaging centers and labs. The instinct was to build or acquire capabilities internally, on the assumption that ownership was the only reliable path to quality and control. But C-suites are now focused on a different question. Executives across system

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types have stopped asking "can we build this?" and instead posing the question: "who is the best in the world at this, and how do we build a deep relationship with them?"
Publisher's note: How might this same question apply to hospice leaders?

51 **OpenAI said it solved 300+ complicated math problems, mathematicians are livid**
Morning Brew; by Matty Merritt; 10/7/26
All this complicated math and no one was left sobbing at the kitchen table. This week, OpenAI dumped solutions to 372 of the world's previously unsolved problems across number theory, algebraic geometry, topology, and other fields most of us have no business trying to understand. The release has mathematicians spiraling as AI models power through problems some have spent their lives working on.
Publisher's note: While not hospice specific, this article demonstrates how quickly AI is changing the mathematical field (and many others).

52 **The future of care at home demands a new narrative**
HomeCare; by Jennifer Sheets; 10/6/26
No one disputes that fraud, waste and abuse have no place in Medicare or Medicaid. Our community has been clear and consistent on that point. But there's a difference between rooting out bad actors and treating an entire sector as suspect until proven otherwise. Right now, we are drifting toward the latter.

53 **Out now: the Global Atlas of Palliative Care, 3rd edition**
Worldwide Hospice Palliative Care Alliance (WHPCA); by Stephen R. Connor; 10/9/26
Today, at the 50th Montréal International Palliative Care Congress, we launched the third edition of the Global Atlas of Palliative Care. It offers the most complete picture

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yet of who needs palliative care worldwide, and who is receiving it. The picture shows real progress, but a gap that remains very w ide.

- 73.5 million people are estimated to need palliative care every year.
- About 14% of that need is met by specialized palliative care services. In low- and middle-income countries, only 4% of people in need receive it.
- 25,000 → 33,720 The approximate growth in specialized palliative care services between 2017 and 2025. Patients served rose from almost 7 million to over 10.4 million.

54 **'Byzantine ownership arrangements': Calls to scrutinize coding and profit incentives in nursing home Medicare payments**

Skilled Nursing News; by Zahida Siddiqi; 10/9/26

Policy analysts at the nonpartisan agency that advises Congress on Medicare policy are planning to investigate potential coding distortions, payment inaccuracies and whether financial incentives influence patient selection by nursing home providers as part of an assessment of payment accuracy in fee-for-service Medicare's ***skilled nursing facility and home health payment systems***. At its October meeting Friday, the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) discussed a research work plan, with commissioners calling attention to for-profit providers seeking to game the system, with a rising role of hidden private equity influence. [MedPAC presentation slides here.]

Publisher's note: *Bold and italics above are ours; if MedPAC is looking at this in SNF and HHA, hospice is likely not too far behind...*

55 **Empassion CEO: MA Can Help with Hospice Program Integrity**

Hospice News; by Jim Parker; 10/13/26

Structures like Medicare Advantage (MA) can help improve hospice program integrity and reduce the health care spend, according to Robin Heffernan, CEO of Empassion Health. Empassion Health operates in 45 states... Hospice News sat down with

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Heffernan to discuss past program integrity issues within the home health benefit, how MA may have helped and what this means for hospices.

56 **Hospitals are seeing slim margins in 2026**

Chief Healthcare Executive; by Ron Southwick; 10/12/26

A new Strata Decision Technology report examining hospitals in the first half of 2026 illustrates the subdued performance for many hospitals. At the start of the year, median hospital operating margins were in negative territory (-0.6% in January and -0.3% in February). Hospital operating margins have moved into positive territory as the year has progressed, but the numbers are hardly lofty, with median operating margins reaching 0.7% by June. This comes after a solid second half of 2025, when hospital operating margins ranged between 1% and 1.5%.

57 **Where can Americans access palliative care? New national initiative aims to find out**

Globe Newswire; by Elizabeth Dowling; 10/14/26

Where can people living with serious illness access specialty palliative care in the United States, and where is that care still out of reach? Today, there is no comprehensive national source showing where specialty palliative care is available across both hospital and community settings. The Center to Advance Palliative Care (CAPC) is working to change that with the launch of the Palliative Care Program Inventory (Program Inventory), a national initiative to map where specialty palliative care programs operate and where gaps in access remain. The Program Inventory will collect information directly from specialty palliative care programs nationwide, including data on staffing, patient volume, and care delivery models. The resulting data will support research,

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policy, and advocacy efforts to better understand - and ultimately expand - access to specialty palliative care across the country.

58 **What hospice buyers are looking for in 2026**

Hospice News; by Jim Parker; 10/16/26

Hospice buyers in the M&A market in 2026 are looking for strong regulatory compliance, solid cash flow and effective leadership as they hunt for deals. Hospice M&A has seen an uptick in late 2025 and to date in 2026 after a three-year slump in deal activity. The M&A advisory firm The Braff Group projects that 44 transactions will take place in 2026, senior managing director Mark Kulik previously told Hospice News.

59 **Hidden consciousness in coma patients: researchers unlock direct communication**

TakeToNews; by David Miller; 10/23/26

Patients who lie motionless in bed following severe brain injuries and show no reaction to external stimuli are clinically classified as unconscious. However, groundbreaking new research reveals that a significant portion of these individuals may perceive much more of their surrounding environment than previously assumed—and may even possess the capability to communicate. These revelations stem from comprehensive studies led by neurologist Dr. Jan Claassen and his colleagues at Columbia University in New York. The team successfully developed a non-invasive brain-computer interface designed to establish contact with patients presumed to be completely unresponsive.

60 **What the dying dream about, and why a Buffalo doctor wants the world to listen**

The Buffalo News, Buffalo, NY; by Jon Harris; 10/;27/26

When Dr. Christopher Kerr and his research team at Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo began studying the end-of-life experiences of their patients, the work was intended to convince skeptical doctors that they should recognize predeath visions and dreams as medically important to improve the care provided to the dying. But after years of

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research, interviews with more than 1,400 patients and a published book, many of Kerr's fellow physicians remained uninterested. Kerr's findings, however, seeped out and reached an even wider audience. Since his *TEDx Talk* in Buffalo in 2015, Kerr has been interviewed by The New York Times, The Washington Post, Oprah Winfrey for *The Oprah Podcast* and, just recently, by Steven Bartlett for the popular podcast, *The Diary of a CEO*.		
	Total	**15**

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