



Top News Stories of the Month, February 2026

Article Summary		
Category	#	%
A1 Mission Moments	2	4%
A2 Reimbursement Challenges, Warning Signs, and Implications	2	4%
A3 Competition to be Aware of	8	15%
A4 Workforce Challenges	8	15%
A5 Patient, Family, and Future Customer Demographics and Trends	5	9%
A6 Regulatory and Political	11	20%
A7 Technology and Innovations	2	4%
A8 Speed of Change, Resiliency, and Re-Culture	0	0%
A9 The Human Factor	0	0%
A10 Highlighted Articles of Interest	16	30%
Totals	54	100%

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A10 Highlighted Articles of Interest

39 **Lifespark's COMPLETE Senior Living Model sets new standard for senior living innovation**

Business Wire, Minneapolis, MN; Press Release; 1/27/26

Lifespark, a complete senior health company managing more than 50 senior living communities in Minnesota and Wisconsin, has unveiled its COMPLETE Senior Living (CSL) model with plans for significant growth in 2026. The CSL model integrates four key components: Lifespark Senior Living Management, SPARK Growth and Wellness led by Dr. Bill Thomas, Lifespark Medical Group, and Lifespark Hospice.

40 **Stop losing customers: Why your retention strategy needs AI now**

BusinessWorld; by Sheila Salamanca; 1/6/26

Here's a question that keeps executives up at night: Why are customers leaving, and what can we do about it? If you're watching customers slip away despite your best efforts, you're not alone. In subscription-based businesses — think streaming services, software, telecom — losing just 5% more customers can slash profits by 25% or more. The math is brutal. But the solution isn't acquiring more customers. It's keeping the ones you have. This isn't just common sense; it's now backed by AI... Companies like Verizon and Vodafone have already figured this out. They're using neural networks, sophisticated AI systems inspired by how our brains work, to predict which customers are about to leave, and how to intervene before it's too late.

Publisher's note: This interesting article recently came across my desk. Hospice's focus retention strategies on staff, not patients. This article might help with both.

41 **Crossroads House to launch 'talking about death over dinner' program**

The Batavian; by Howard B. Owens; 2/2/26 Crossroads House will launch a community conversation program this fall designed to help people discuss end-of-life wishes before a crisis makes those conversations impossible. The program, called "Talking About Death Over Dinner. Won't Kill You," will bring small groups together over meals to break the ice on what founder Kathy Panepento calls "one of life's most profound topics." ... The dinner discussions will be facilitated gatherings for friends, book clubs, church groups, neighbors or co-workers. A trained facilitator will guide conversations



through thoughtful questions about quality of life, personal values and end-of-life care preferences.

42 **“Existential risk” – Why scientists are racing to define consciousness**

WDC TV News; by WDC TV News Staff; 2/1/26

As artificial intelligence continues to advance and ethical concerns grow alongside it, scientists say the need to understand consciousness has reached a critical point. In a new review published in *Frontiers in Science*, researchers warn that progress in AI and neurotechnology is moving faster than scientific understanding of consciousness. This gap, they argue, could lead to serious ethical problems if it is not addressed. The authors say explaining how consciousness emerges is now an urgent scientific and moral priority. A clearer understanding could eventually make it possible to develop scientific methods for detecting consciousness. That breakthrough would have far-reaching consequences ...

43 **Generative artificial intelligence in palliative care: A comparative evaluation of ChatGPT-4o and ChatGPT-5 as clinical decision support tools**

Digital Health; by Emre Vuraloglu, Kervansaray; 1/29/26

Conclusions: ChatGPT-5 demonstrated measurable improvements over ChatGPT-4o in key domains of palliative care symptom management, while maintaining consistently high ethical sensitivity. These findings provide the first systematic evidence of the potential of generative AI, with the updated ChatGPT-5 model released in August 2025, as a complementary and reliable clinical decision support tool in palliative care.

44 **Factoring in the human side of robotics**

The Journal of Healthcare Contracting; by R. Dana Barlow

... If incorporating robots in supply chain becomes the norm, and many believe it will be the case, then supply chain executives, leaders, managers and professionals must come



to grips with any reservations they might have. How to accomplish that depends on the individual and the corporate culture in which he or she serves and works. ... "We're in healthcare. Continuous improvement and innovation are a big part of the Memorial Hermann culture," he told *The Journal of Healthcare Contracting*. "We have our caregivers, physicians, nurses. They're always looking for new, innovative ways to deliver great patient care. ..."

Editor's Notes: Are supply chain executives admonished to "come to grips with any reservations they might have," or should they--do they--listen, learn from, and incorporate valid reservations into their development and use of robotics? I do not assume to have answers--for the sake of delivering "great patient care"--I simply ask the glaring question.

45 **Hospice doctor shares what happens in the moments immediately after death**

Good; by Adam Albright Hanna; 2/3/26

Throughout human history, [one question](#) has bewildered every civilization, society, and individual. What happens [after we die](#) ? For some people, it is a [question for science](#). For others, it is a question of faith. But for Dr. B.J. Miller, it is a question that he is totally fine not knowing the answer to. Miller is a [hospice and palliative care physician](#) at the [University of California, San Francisco](#). He is one of the world's leading voices on dignified death, and for him, the end of life is actually about the living. ... "I've been around people who are just about to die," Miller said. "Bodies that have just died. And there is this lingering sense, it's true. There's a feeling. It's a palpable... yeah, there's a lingering." ... "I didn't need to have control over everything, I didn't need to know the answers anymore. I mean, I love not knowing. The answer's unimportant. It's just a sacred and gorgeous moment."

Editor's Note: Having served in direct hospice patient care from 1993–2002, I was present with many persons during their active dying and in the moments just after death, including attending deaths as a chaplain. Over time—and especially through the intimate experience of my parents' deaths—that sense of sacredness Dr. Miller describes remains



real for me. So I find myself wondering and asking non-clinical leaders: when you look at Average Daily Census (AD C), Length of Stay (LOS), and other familiar metrics, what do you see? Numbers on a spreadsheet? Or living measures of something immeasurably human—something that truly matters?

46 **Dr. Steve Landers to step down as National Alliance CEO, succeeded by Jennifer Sheets**

Hospice News; by Jim Parker; 2/11/26

Dr. Steve Landers is stepping down as CEO of the National Alliance for Care at Home effective Feb. 9. Former President and CEO of Caring Brands International and Interim HealthCare Jennifer Sheets will succeed him. Landers led the organization through its integration period. The Alliance is the result of a 2024 merger between the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization and the National Association for Home Care & Hospice. Sheets will become the Alliance's new top executive as of Feb. 17. She will also serve as president of the Alliance's affiliate Research Institute for Home Care.

47 **Enhabit and Encompass Health collect \$43.1 million from individual defendants in Delaware fiduciary breach case**

BusinessWire, Dallas, TX; Press Release; 2/12/26

Enhabit, Inc. announced that, along with Encompass Health Corporation, they have collected \$43.1 million in full satisfaction of their claims for attorneys' fees and mitigation damages in the Delaware Court of Chancery against former officer Chris Walker, Vistria Group senior partner David Schuppan, and Nautic Partners managing director Christopher Corey. These claims related to the December 2024 judgment in favor of Enhabit and Encompass Health, finding "egregious breaches of the duty of loyalty" by April Anthony, Luke James, and Walker while serving as senior officers at Encompass Health's former home health and hospice division, which is now Enhabit. Enhabit and Encompass Health will divide the settlement proceeds substantially equally.



48 **Aveanna CEO: Hospice multiples still too high**

Hospice News; by Jim Parker; 2/13/26

As Aveanna Healthcare Holdings considers potential acquisitions, hospices are not on the menu due to their high price tags. Hospice multiples skyrocketed during the boom M&A years of 2019 through 2022, reaching as high as 26x, sometimes more. As transactions slowed down between 2023 and 2025, one contributing factor was a disconnect between sellers' and buyers' expectations regarding valuations. Now hospice deals are **picking up steam**. The fourth quarter of 2025 saw the industry's highest deal volume since 2021, and one reason is that sellers' and buyers' expectations are becoming more aligned. However, this trend hasn't yet gone far enough, according to Aveanna CEO Jeff Shaner. "[Hospice multiples] are all north of 10x. ..."

49 **VITAS CEO Joel Wherley: 4 core values of hospice care**

Hospice News; by Jim Parker; 2/6/26

A mission-driven approach that prioritizes patient and employee well-being is crucial to success as a hospice business, according to Joel Wherley, president and CEO of VITAS Healthcare. ... Hospice News sat down with Wherley at the **Home Care 100** conference in Scottsdale, Arizona to discuss his outlook for hospice in 2026, what the community can expect for VITAS in 2026 and what keeps him up at night as a health care leader

- Our first key core value is that patients and families come first. ...
- Our second key core value, however, aligns right next to that first key core value, and that is, we take care of each other. ...
- Our third key core value is, I think, a really unique but simplistic thought. We're humans providing care for humans. ...
- Then the fourth one to me, in hospice something that I have learned that I think is the most important. Hospice is not about death. It's about life. ...



50 **Hospice spending, care quality scores by state**

Becker's Hospital Review; by Elizabeth Gregerson; 2/18/26

California and Nevada hospice providers had the **lowest** care-quality scores despite spending the most per beneficiary to provide care between Jan. 1, 2023, and Dec. 31, 2024, according to CMS data released Feb. 18. Rhode Island and West Virginia had the highest hospice care quality scores during the data collection period. CMS' **Hospice Quality Reporting Program** includes data submitted directly by hospice providers, from Medicare hospice claims, and from the Hospice Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems survey. [Here are the hospice care quality scores and per-beneficiary spending amounts by state between Jan. 1, 2023, and Dec. 31, 2024, according to CMS: ...](#)

51 **'It's a collaborative effort': Northern Light Medical Transport paramedics providing hospice support**

WABI-5, Bangor, ME; by Alyssa Thurlow; 2/19/26

... Paramedics can help patients across Maine with a variety of needs, but some are embracing a slower-paced role, focused on assisting those who are at the end of life. "Patients have access to care 24/7, and part of that coverage for after-hours is now coming through the community paramedicine program," said hospice educator Allie Rohrer, RN. ... "It's not with lights and sirens. It's very low key. It's driving there in a car, and then it's talking through the issues," said paramedic Ed Moreshead. ... Northern Light's community paramedics are contracted with **Northern Light Home Care & Hospice**. Families in need of assistance call the triage number, and a hospice nurse and on-call physician can respond if needed.

52 **Building momentum: How new national Alliance CEO Jennifer Sheets will propel hospice forward**

Hospice News; by Jim Parker; 2/24/26

The most important lessons in health care leadership are learned at the bedside,



according to Jennifer Sheets, the newly appointed CEO of the National Alliance for Care at Home. ... In her first media interview since taking the helm at the Alliance, Sheets spoke with Hospice News about the organization’s priorities for 2026 and beyond, the goals and needs of hospice providers and the lessons she’s learned as a home-based care leader.

53 [The trends—and traps—shaping 2026](#)

JD Supra; by Morgan Lewis; 2/24/26

The global business landscape in 2026 is marked by accelerating political realignments, intensifying regulatory oversight, rapid technological maturation, and shifting market expectations. In this year’s report, our lawyers assess the trends and emerging risk areas that organizations across industries and regions are likely to encounter in 2026 and beyond. Drawing on insights from a dynamic array of developments—from the business repercussions of geopolitical recalibration to the continued expansion of transformative technologies—this compilation delivers a forward-looking perspective designed to support informed strategy and purposeful decision-making for businesses worldwide.

54 [How scenario planning and driver-based forecasting work together](#)

WriteUpCafe.com; by Nicolas Diaz; 2/26/25

In today’s fast-paced business environment, organizations must navigate uncertainty while maintaining operational efficiency and financial discipline. One of the most effective ways to achieve this is by combining scenario planning and driver-based forecasting. By integrating these two approaches, companies gain the flexibility to model multiple future outcomes while tying forecasts to the key operational and financial drivers that truly impact performance. This fusion provides a robust framework for strategic decision-making, risk management, and long-term planning. ...

Total	16
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