



Top News Stories of the Month, February 2025

Article Summary		
Category	#	%
A1 Mission Moments	3	6%
A2 Reimbursement Challenges, Warning Signs, and Implications	9	18%
A3 Competition to be Aware of	4	8%
A4 Workforce Challenges	8	16%
A5 Patient, Family, and Future Customer Demographics and Trends	8	16%
A6 Regulatory and Political	5	10%
A7 Technology and Innovations	1	2%
A8 Speed of Change, Resiliency, and Re-Culture	5	10%
A9 The Human Factor	2	4%
A10 Highlighted Articles of Interest	5	10%
Totals	50	100%

A1 Mission Moments

1 Follow-up: Helene and hospice care in the western North Carolina mountains

Hospice & Palliative Care Today; summary from a meeting between Vern Grindstaff (CEO, Compassionate Care Western North Carolina), Chris Comeaux and Tina Gentry (Teleios Collaborative Network), Cordt Kassner and Joy Berger (this newsletter); 1/28/25

Hospice recovery efforts from Hurricane Helene in North Carolina's mountains have been massive, with extensive long-term needs ahead. Vern Grindstaff, CEO of Compassionate Care Western North Carolina described the "new normal" they are experiencing. Photos of this hospice and its service area vividly portrayed this hospice before, soon after Helene, and in its current recovery. Key topics included unthinkable patient care challenges with creative problem-solving, financial implications amounting to a \$350,000 deficit for repairs, and the trauma experienced by staff—both professionally and personally. Discussions highlighted the importance of long-term recovery strategies, including the involvement of larger trusts for sustained funding,



while also recognizing community support efforts by organizations like the Cajun Navy and Samaritan's Purse. Additionally, Chris Comeaux is presenting to hospice organizations about Emergency Disaster Management, equipping leaders to learn from this tragedy.

Editor's note: [Click here](#) for a map of Compassionate Care Western North Carolina's service area (CCWNC). [Click here](#) to donate to their ongoing recovery. We thank our readers for your previous support to this and other hospices affected by emergency disasters. Additional resources:

- [CMS Emergency Preparedness Rule](#)
- [Wisconsin's CMS Emergency Preparedness Rule Toolkit: Hospices](#)
- ["Community Crisis and Grief"](#) public service education, designed for hospice organizations.

2 [Father keeping a promise to son to 'never miss a baseball game' despite entering hospice](#)

Fox 13 - Tampa Bay, FL; by Briona Arradondo; 1/30/25

A father diagnosed with cancer left hospice Thursday to spend the evening making final memories with his family on a baseball diamond in Tampa. Family and friends surrounded Steve Uhal and his wife Amy with love and support as he arrived to see his 9-year-old son Charlie play one last game. ...

3 [What leaders can learn from the California wildfires](#)

Modern Healthcare; by Robert Stone, CEO of City of Hope, Duarte, CA; 1/31/25

When wildfires threatened City of Hope comprehensive cancer center near Los Angeles in recent weeks, hundreds of our leaders and staff – many with homes in the path of the blaze – rushed to campus at 2:30 in the morning to prepare to evacuate more than 200 hospitalized cancer patients. City of Hope, one of the largest research and treatment organizations in the U.S., cares for people with highly complex medical conditions. On the night the wildfires threatened our campus, our patients included people receiving CAR-T immunotherapy, novel clinical trials, and undergoing bone marrow transplants. ... Our healthcare partners in the region were also impacted by wildfires in varying ways.



Every health system we spoke with prioritized the safety of not only their own patients and staff but ours as well. ... What stands out from this middle-of-the-night experience and the days that followed are important lessons that can only emerge from an organization where people are deeply connected to the mission.

- Prioritize patients and empower your people ...
- A strong culture is essential ...
- Draw on institutional expertise ...
- Communicate often, and with gratitude ...
- Support your people ...

Total	3
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A2 Reimbursement Challenges, Warning Signs, and Implications

A. General to Hospice

4 **DOGE probes CMS for Medicare, Medicaid fraud: WSJ**

Becker's Hospital Review; by Rylee Wilson; 2/5/25

Members of Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency have been granted access to payment and contracting systems at CMS, [The Wall Street Journal](#) reported Feb. 5. Department representatives have been on-site at CMS' offices this week, examining spending data for potential fraud or waste and reviewing the agency's organization and staffing, unnamed sources told the *Journal*. ... DOGE aims to cut federal spending by \$1 trillion, with Medicaid emerging as a likely target, according to [The New York Times](#). CMS spent more than \$1.5 trillion on healthcare programs in fiscal year 2024, accounting for 22% of total federal spending, according to the agency's 2024 annual report. "Yeah, this [CMS] is where the big money fraud is happening," Mr. Musk wrote on [X](#) in response to the *Journal's* article.

5 **Over 80% of healthcare cost in the final year of life spent on hospitals**

Nuffield Trust press release; 2/5/25

[UK] New research from the Nuffield Trust and the Health Economics Unit, commissioned by leading end of life charity Marie Curie, finds that UK public expenditure for people in the last year of life across healthcare, social care and social security is in the region of £22 billion. Over half (53%) of this public spending in the final year of life is spent on healthcare. Hospital care represents the largest share of healthcare spending, accounting for 81% of total healthcare spend. More than half of this healthcare spend (56%) goes on emergency hospital care... In contrast, public



spending on primary and community healthcare makes up only 11% of health expenditure for people in the last year of life, with less than 4% spent on hospice care.

6 **Medicare's 2025 physician pay cut, explained**

Becker's Hospital CFO Report; by Stefanie Asin; 2/5/25

As of Jan. 1, Medicare is paying physicians almost 3% less than last year for services provided to the country's 66 million Medicare patients. The decreased payments aren't a surprise or anything new, as CMS, by law, must keep physician payments budget neutral (cannot raise total Medicare spending by more than \$20 million in a year). As a result, since 2020, Medicare has cut physician pay each year ... [Click on the title's link to continue reading these items.]

- Five things to know about Medicare's 2025 physicians pay cut ...
- Seven things to know about the pending bill to roll back the pay cut ...

7 **Hospice provider sues to demand denied employee retention credit**

Bloomberg Law; by Tristan Navera; 2/13/25

Hospice healthcare provider Passages LLC is contesting the IRS denial of a \$663,000 employee retention credit, arguing that it's eligible for the coronavirus incentive program due to the disruptions it faced during the pandemic. The New Orleans-based company said the IRS wrongly denied its claim for the ERC credit—a program that reimbursed companies for keeping workers on the payroll during the economic disruption caused by Covid-19—for one quarter of 2021. The company endured partial suspension of its operations and should qualify, it told the US District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana.

8 **Navigating palliative care models in ACO partnerships**

Hospice News; by Markisan Naso; 2/14/25

Partnerships between health care providers and Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs) can help to create effective, value-based palliative care models for patients, but navigating the development of those relationships requires communication and a true



commitment to collaboration. ... "ACOs are looking for high-quality care that reduces avoidable crises, and specialty palliative care has been proven to do just that," Allison Silvers, chief of health care transformation at the Center to Advance Palliative Care (CAPC), told Palliative Care News. ...

9 **Palliative care's most disruptive forces in 2025**

Hospice News; by Holly Vossel; 2/25/25

Palliative care providers are taking varied routes to address the most disruptive forces they are encountering this year, rising to challenges that have been persistent across the sector. Mounting workforce pressures mark the most significant of concerns for palliative care providers, according to Dr. Martha Twaddle, The Waud Family Medical Directorship's palliative medicine and supportive care clinical professor of medicine at Northwestern Medicine. The nation lacks a sufficient supply of palliative care professionals amid a swelling population of seriously ill patients, driving up demand. Current reimbursement streams are challenging the staffing issues even further, Twaddle stated. ... Workforce shortages and lack of sustainable reimbursement are indeed the largest obstacles to palliative care growth, according to Center to Advance Palliative Care (CAPC) CEO Brynn Bowman.

B. Medicare Advantage

10 **Flaws in the Medicare Advantage Star Ratings**

JAMA Health Forum; David J. Meyers, PhD, MPH; Amal N. Trivedi, MD; Andrew M. Ryan, PhD; 1/25

The objective of the star ratings is to help beneficiaries select better plans, and to reward plans that deliver high-quality care. In June 2024, a US district court judge ruled that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) inappropriately calculated Medicare Advantage (MA) Star ratings due to not implementing a previously announced statistical adjustment. First, it is not clear if the star ratings are actually capturing a higher quality, as several measures in the star rating are reported by the plans themselves and plans often overstate their performance. Second, over 80% of contracts by enrollment are rated 4 stars or higher, which is the threshold needed to earn bonus payments, and a single star rating is assigned to each contract even when contracts may cover many different states and regions. Third, while bonus payments for



star ratings are costly, plans eligible for enhanced bonuses have not shown greater improvement in measures related to clinical quality or administrative effectiveness. Taken together, the current star ratings are neither useful for all beneficiaries to make their plan decisions, nor do they appear to be capturing quality or catalyzing improvement.

11 **[Humana posts \\$693M loss in Q4](#)**

Becker's Payer Issues; by Jakob Emerson; 2/11/25

Humana lost \$693 million in the fourth quarter of 2024, according to the company's year-end earnings report published Feb. 11. The results reflect increased benefits expenses, particularly in Medicare Advantage and state-based contracts. Despite the challenges, the company projected earnings per share of \$15.88 for 2025, with an adjusted EPS of approximately \$16.25. Total revenues in the fourth quarter were \$29.2 billion, up 10.4% year over year. In 2024, total revenues were \$117.8 billion, up 10.7%. Humana posted a net loss of \$693 million in the fourth quarter, compared to a \$541 million net loss the year prior. In 2024, the company's net income totaled nearly \$1.2 billion, down 52%.

12 **[DOJ launches probe into UnitedHealth's Medicare billing practices after investigative reports](#)**

MSN; by Taylor Herzlich; 3/22/25

The Department of Justice has reportedly launched an investigation into UnitedHealth Group's Medicare billing practices as scrutiny over the health insurance industry intensifies — sending the company's stock plummeting. The probe is analyzing the company's practice of frequently logging diagnoses that trigger larger payments to its Medicare Advantage plans, according to The Wall Street Journal. UnitedHealth shares plunged nearly 9% Friday. A series of Wall Street Journal reports last year found that Medicare paid UnitedHealth billions of dollars for questionable diagnoses.

Total	9
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A3 Competition to be Aware of

13 [**UnitedHealth Group withdraws motion to dismiss antitrust challenge**](#)

Competition Policy International; by CPI; 2/8/25

UnitedHealth Group has withdrawn its motion to dismiss the Justice Department's antitrust lawsuit challenging its proposed acquisition of Amedisys, a home care and hospice provider. The healthcare giant stated that new information provided by the government in late January rendered its initial motion moot. ... On January 29, the Justice Department responded to the motion by filing a list of 381 service areas where it alleged the acquisition would negatively impact competition. UnitedHealth Group, in its latest filing, acknowledged that this submission "finally identified" the locations in question, leading the company to withdraw its motion.

14 [**How the DOJ-UnitedHealth Group lawsuit could change hospice M&A**](#)

Hospice News; by Jim Parker; 2/11/25

A U.S. Justice Department (DOJ) victory in its lawsuit to block UnitedHealth Group's (NYSE: UNH) acquisition of Amedisys is unlikely to have a cooling effect on hospice M&A, according to some experts. The UnitedHealth Group subsidiary Optum in June 2023 agreed to acquire Amedisys in a \$3.3 billion deal. Optum in February 2023 also acquired the home health and hospice provider LHC Group for \$5.4 billion. DOJ in December 2024 filed the lawsuit to kill the deal. The state attorneys general of Maryland, Illinois, New Jersey, and New York are also plaintiffs in the suit. ... DOJ's chief concern is that the combination of the two companies would dampen competition in the hospice and home health space. Should the transaction proceed, Optum would control 30% or more of the home health or hospice services in eight states, according to the Justice Department's complaint.

15 [**UnitedHealth, Amedisys plan divestiture of up to 128 locations**](#)

Modern Healthcare; by Diane Eastabrook; 2/11/25

UnitedHealth Group said in a court filing Friday [2/7/25] its plans to sell at least 128 home health and hospice locations to ease the Justice Department's antitrust concerns around its acquisition of Amedisys. The divestiture plans were part of a filing in the United States District Court for the District of Maryland in a response to the Justice Department's lawsuit to block the proposed acquisition. ... The company didn't identify which locations would be sold, but said they would be in areas where UnitedHealth Group and Amedisys' combined market share would exceed the thresholds federal



regulators allege could harm competition. UnitedHealth Group said in the court filing it was in the process of identifying qualified buyers who would be able to operate and grow the divested locations.

A. Mergers & Acquisitions

16 **[New Day Healthcare acquires Christian Senior Care Services](#)**

Hospice News; by Jim Parker; 2/20/25

New Day Healthcare has acquired the home-based care company Christian Senior Care Services in Houston for an undisclosed sum. The deal, New Day’s 13th to date, expands the company’s personal care services division into five additional counties in the Houston metro area. The operation will continue to operate under its current brand, and the entire staff will remain in place. ... The transaction adds personal care services to New Day’s hospice and home health operations in the Houston area, a key step in the provider’s efforts to build out a multi-faceted continuum of care. ... Similar to national demographic trends, a growing aging population is driving demand for hospice in Texas. Seniors 65 and older represent 13.8% of the Lone Star State’s overall population, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Total	4
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A4 Workforce Challenges

A. Paints the Picture

17 **[Immigration policies’ ‘chilling effect’ on the hospice workforce](#)**

Hospice News; by Holly Vossel; 2/5/24

The White House recently issued several executive orders that have ramped up the nation’s immigration enforcement policies. The health care sector may be facing a host of staffing and operational challenges as the regulatory moves unfold, according to Hannah Liu, manager of immigration advocacy at Asian Americans Advancing Justice (AAJC). A tightening of immigration policies has come with “concern, panic and confusion” across diverse communities nationwide, Liu stated. “As the effects of these hostile immigration policies play out, patients may also face the life-or-death situations that arise from interruptions in care caused by staffing shortages,” Liu told Hospice News in an email. “Immigrants in the health care industry may fear the possibility of



arrest and detention, including in workplaces like hospitals, palliative care facilities and clinics.”

18 **[Staffing shortages weighing on hospice executive’s minds in 2025](#)**

Hospice News; by Holly Vossel; 2/19/25

Hospice leaders have lost sleep over workforce pressures plaguing the industry for several years running, a trend that is not anticipated to abate anytime soon. Staffing challenges were cited as the leading concern among 35% of 112 hospice professionals who participated in this year’s Outlook Survey by Hospice News and Homecare Homebase. This represented an 18% decline compared to the 2023 survey results. ...

- Biggest staffing issues in hospice ...
- Addressing staff priorities ...
- *Click on the title's link to read the full article*

[Notable mentions: Butte Home Health & Hospice, Community Hospice & Palliative Care, Enhabit, Hospice of the Valley, Pathways]

B. Implications of the issue

19 **[‘Severe understaffing and sharp cuts’: 2,000 health care workers to picket Providence on Wednesday](#)**

Eureka Times-Standard, Eureka, CA; by Robert Schaulis; 2/11/25

More than 2,000 health care workers will picket Providence hospitals and health care facilities throughout Northern California this Wednesday. The day of action will take place across six sites throughout the region — four hospitals and two hospices across Humboldt, Napa and Sonoma counties — including Providence St. Joseph Hospital in Eureka. More than 2,000 health care workers represented by the National Union of Healthcare Workers have elected to picket, citing “severe understaffing and sharp cuts to health services in communities that are dependent on Providence for their medical care.” ... Layoffs have also resulted in increased caseloads in areas like Sonoma County, where Providence has laid off hospice workers.



C. Solutions

20 **[Leading nursing facility cuts turnover by 50% with DailyPay Benefit for employees](#)**

HealthCareDive, New York; Press Release from DailyPay; 1/30/25

The Springs Arkansas, the leading skilled nursing provider across Arkansas, is celebrating three years of partnership with DailyPay – a worktech platform and leading provider of earned wage access. Throughout this partnership, The Springs Arkansas is empowering employees with the ability to access their earned pay on their own timeline. ... Since implementing DailyPay into their benefits offerings, they have seen a 74% participation rate, and in 2024 reduced turnover by 50%. Headquartered in Little Rock, AR, The Springs Arkansas operates over 20 skilled nursing and rehabilitation facilities, offering a wide range of care services, including skilled rehab, long-term care, memory care, and hospice care. ... The Springs Arkansas introduced DailyPay in January 2022 to better support its dedicated workforce.

21 **[How can we cultivate happiness in medicine?](#)**

The Hospitalist; by Nikhil Sood, MD and Marjorie Bessel, MD; 2/3/25

Burnout has led to early physician retirements and clinicians leaving the profession, resulting in an unprecedented physician shortage and access challenges. This jeopardizes our ability to meet the community's needs and fulfill our mission of making healthcare more accessible to improve quality of life. The question is, how can we, as a healthcare system, tackle this issue head-on? ... The CHIM strategy is a comprehensive, evidence-based approach, driven by clinicians, that supports wellness from an individual and organizational perspective. ... The six dimensions of the strategy include the following:

- Design ...
- Leaders ...
- Social Community ...
- Individual Wellness and Well-being ...
- Second Victims ...
- Pebbles ...

22 **[The case for a 4-day workweek for nurse managers](#)**

Becker's Clinical Leadership; by Kelly Gooch; 2/18/25

Four-day workweeks lead to an improved work-life balance for nurse managers, nurse leaders at Philadelphia-based Fox Chase Cancer Center argue in a new paper shared



with *Becker's*. "A 4-Day Workweek for Nurse Leaders: Unveiling the Lessons Learned" is based on a study conducted at the 100-bed specialty cancer center. The study aims to evaluate the influence of a four-day workweek on nurse leaders' perceptions of workload and job satisfaction. Results of the study were published Feb. 17, and included 24 care delivery units and 43 nursing directors, managers and assistant nurse managers.

23 **8 emerging trends that will shape recruiting in 2025**

ERE Media; by Caitlyn McDonough and Jamie Kohn; 2/18/25

In 2025, CEOs have set their sights on driving growth through transformation. At the same time, organizations are struggling with efficiency pressures, sustained talent shortages, and an unpredictable regulatory landscape. ... In the context of all these challenges, we've identified eight key trends that will influence talent acquisition strategies in 2025.

1. More Roles Require "Buy, Then Build" Talent Strategies ...
2. Organizations Rescope Early Career Recruiting Programs to Boost ROI ...
3. Segmented Service Models Become Essential ...
4. Recruiting Teams Defend Against Candidate Fraud ...
5. Recruiter Roles Need Change Management to Capitalize on AI ...
6. Organizations Reimagine Recruiter Careers as Entry-Level Roles Evolve ...
7. Skills-Based Hiring Exposes Manager Capability Gaps ...
8. The Narrative With Executives Focuses on Quality of Hire ...

24 **3 bold and disruptive strategies to retain top-performing leaders**

Forbes; by Dr. Cheryl Robinson; 2/19/25

... The Global Leadership [Forecast](#) 2025 by DDI reveals a concerning trend: leaders are burning out at unprecedented rates. With 40% of leaders contemplating resignation due to burnout, top talent is either stepping down or disengaging, leaving



organizations vulnerable to performance decline and talent gaps. The stakes are high.

...

- Why Leaders Are Resigning: The Three Critical Factors
 - Erosion of Trust in Leadership ...
 - Burnout ...
 - AI-Driven Uncertainty ...
- [Retention Strategies] ...
 - Implement A Founder's Mentality Program ...
 - Offer Unlimited Growth Sabbaticals ...
 - Establish Reverse Hierarchy Leadership Rotations ...

[Click on the title's link for the full article; limited access per paywall.]

	Total	8
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A5 Patient, Family, and Future Customer Demographics and Trends

25 [Does confronting mortality make our lives more meaningful? | The Ethical Life podcast](#)

SC Now, Florence, SC; podcast hosts Richard Kyte and Scott Rada; 1/29/25

Hosts Richard Kyte and Scott Rada discuss how our awareness of mortality shapes the way we live. Kyte begins by discussing how ancient philosophers, particularly the Stoics, believed we should keep death constantly in mind, [helping] us avoid self-deception about our mortality and the tendency to become overly attached to material possessions and markers of success. Later, the hosts discuss how major religions have grappled with the question of what happens after death. ... Rada and Kyte share their personal reflections on mortality. ... Kyte says he ponders it daily, not in a morbid way, but to remind himself to use his finite time wisely. They discuss how people near the end of life often shift their priorities to relationships, forgiveness and small joys.

26 [Access tops list of Americans' healthcare concerns: 4 survey findings](#)

Becker's Clinical Leadership; by Erica Carbajal; 2/5/25

A quarter of Americans [rank](#) healthcare access and affordability as the top public health



priority they want government leaders to focus on, according to poll findings from Gallup and Emory University's Rollins School of Public Health. ... Four key findings:

- Twenty-five percent of respondents selected access and affordability as their highest priority when asked about 15 issues. ...
- Overall, 37% of respondents included food and water safety among their top three public health priorities; 32% said addressing chronic diseases was among their top three.
- Most Americans agree that the federal government could more effectively address these issues than state governments, the findings showed. ...
- When asked about their most trusted sources of public health information, respondents chose their healthcare providers (54%), scientific research (42%) and the CDC (37%) as their top three. Political officials were among the least trusted sources of information on public health issues.

27 **Americans who've become caregivers rose by a third in 10 years**

The Daily Sentinel, Grand Junction, CO; 2/14/25

A growing numbers of family members now provide care for older adults who live at home or in residential care settings, a new study shows. Their ranks increased 32%, from 18.2 million to 24.1 million, between 2011 and 2022, according to new research in the journal *Health Affairs*. The number of hours that these folks spent caring for older adults with dementia jumped by nearly 50%, from an average 21.4 hours per week in 2011 to 31 hours in 2022. Exactly what is driving the increase in family or unpaid caregiving is not fully understood, but researchers speculate that it may be due to a rise in the number of people who live with the folks who they assist. For the study, researchers culled data from the National Health and Aging Trends Study (NHATS) and the National Study of Caregiving (NSOC) in 2011 and 2022.

28 **20 high-performing healthcare website designs that get results**

Just Digital; by Just Digital Team; 2/17/25

As healthcare becomes more digital, a well-crafted healthcare website design is essential for serving patients, sharing information, and building trust. It's often the first point of contact, making usability, clarity, and accessibility non-negotiable. ... The



majority of visitors to healthcare websites are searching for information. As a result, these healthcare website designs must be appealing to the eye, user-friendly, and simple to navigate. Our team at Just Digital compiled a list of some of the best healthcare website design inspirations online. *[Click on the title's link for website examples and descriptions of design elements "that get results."]*

29 **BCN expands community grief care and integrative medicine with grant**

Bluegrass Care Navigators; News; 2/12/25

Saint Joseph Hospital and Saint Joseph East have awarded Bluegrass Care Navigators (BCN) \$50,000 to support grief services and integrative medicine programs. This funding will help BCN provide essential care to more than 1,000 diverse individuals across Lexington, Frankfort, and Cynthiana and address significant health challenges in 2025. Our Community Grief Services include individual and group counseling, Camp Hope for children and adults, and crisis response. With this grant, we anticipate being able to serve more than 800 individuals through community grief counseling. Our Integrative Medicine offerings—music, art, massage therapy, and mindfulness—expand to be able to support approximately 300 patients with 800 visits, enhancing physical and mental health. ... "Together, we are creating a meaningful impact in the community and improving the mental health and well-being of those we serve," said Liz Fowler, president and CEO of BCN.

Editor's note: After this 2/12 post, [multiple hospice areas served by Bluegrass Care Navigators](#) were flooded this week. We thank BCN for your community grief systems already in place, with significant support ahead for those you serve.

30 **Teleios announces completion of Boomer End-of-Life Care Survey**

Teleios Collaborative Network (TCN), Hendersonville, NC; by Tina Gentry; 2/12/25

Teleios Collaborative Network (TCN) announced the completion of its survey titled "What Baby Boomers Want in End-of-Life Care." This survey aimed to gain insights into the healthcare preferences and needs of the Baby Boomer generation as they age,



transition into retirement and seek end-of-life care. On February 5th, TCN's Visioneering Council, which comprises member CEOs, C-Suite staff, and marketing managers, gathered to discuss the survey results and explore the best ways to utilize this information to enhance patient care. Before reviewing TCN's survey findings, Matthew Wilkinson from NPHI and Bill Keane from Emergence presented results from NPHI's "Aging and End of Life Care Survey." Additionally, Dr. Terry Fulmer provided insights from the John A. Hartford Foundation's survey titled "What Older Adults Want from Health Care." TCN President and CEO Chris Comeaux said, "Over my career, we have been honored to care for the greatest generation. Now that we are at the dawn of the baby boomers being the majority of those we will be honored to care for as they enter their twilight years. Knowing what they expect, what they care about, what they do not want to worry about, all of this is such important data to ensure hospice over the next 30 years is providing an even greater service to patients and families. That's what this study was looking to accomplish. It's a great start in that direction. "

31 **What is death positivity?**

Phaneuf Funeral Homes & Crematorium, New Hampshire & Vermont; by Phaneuf; 2/19/25

Death positivity is a growing movement that challenges the long-held taboos surrounding death. Rather than shying away from the subject, death positivity encourages individuals and communities to discuss mortality openly. It's about accepting death as a natural part of life, reducing the fear and stigma often associated with it, and using that acceptance as a foundation for better end-of-life planning and living more fully. Historically, many cultures—including those in the New England region—often treated death as a private, somber affair. Today, however, a new narrative is emerging: one that celebrates the life lived, honors the memories left behind, and helps families make informed, compassionate decisions about the future.



32 **How boomers are personalizing their last chapter**

Broadview; by Larry Krotz; 2/19/25

From death doulas to digital legacies, this generation is flipping the script on end-of-life traditions. ... I confess that I don't generally think much about dying, though many in my generation do. Baby boomers, that great bulge in the population whose concerns for so long have dominated the culture, have moved from preoccupations with creative retirement or the adequacies of the health-care system to a fascination with death. Witness the immense popularity last year of the Royal Ontario Museum's multisensory exhibit *Death: Life's Greatest Mystery* or the growth of death cafés ... For my contemporaries, death has become the next item on the to-do list. What it will look like. How to prepare for it. How to make it your own. ...

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A6 Regulatory and Political

33 **[CMS Hospice Special Focus Program: What every hospice leader needs to know](#)**

CHAP; by Jennifer Kennedy, Kim Skehan; 1/22/25

Join Jennifer Kennedy and Kim Skehan for an unfiltered conversation about the CMS Hospice Special Focus Program (SFP), launched on January 1, 2025. This transformative program is reshaping hospice care—and Jennifer and Kim are here to ensure you're prepared to adapt and thrive. In this episode, they simplify the complexities of SFP, exploring how it works, who it impacts, and most importantly, how your hospice can stay ahead. Learn how to interpret the program's data-driven selection process, evaluate your organization's readiness, and build the strategies you need to mitigate risks while maintaining top-quality care.

34 **[What you need to know about the HOPE Tool](#)**

HomeCare; by Jennifer Kennedy and Kimberly Skehan; 2/10/25

The Hospice Outcomes and Patient Evaluation (HOPE) assessment tool is scheduled to be implemented Oct. 1, 2025, meaning the clock is ticking for hospice providers to complete internal preparations. Providers can collect and submit hospice item set (HIS) data until Sept. 30, 2025, after which only HOPE data will be accepted for all patients



admitted or discharged on or after Oct. 1, 2025. The HOPE tool is a standardized interdisciplinary assessment that aims to meet these goals from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS): [\[click here for goals\]](#) ... CMS said it is important for providers to ensure their documentation software vendor maintains CoP content while building their HOPE content. The HOPE tool will replace the HIS content, but the core of the HIS data items will be captured in the HOPE tool. Additionally, CMS posted a change table that compares the HIS and HOPE data elements.

35 **Hospice - The time is now for additional integrity oversight**

JAMA Forum; by Joan M. Teno; 4/23

...[Leading hospice organizations](#) are calling for more oversight. The National Partnership for Healthcare and Hospice Innovation, LeadingAge, the National Association for Home Care & Hospice, and the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization provided a comprehensive set of recommendations to preserve the integrity of hospice. These organizations are returning to the historic mission of hospice: to improve care for dying persons and support for their family members... The recommendations put forth by the 4 hospice organizations are important. Further reforms are also needed.

- First, transparency is necessary regarding who owns the hospice, especially involvement of private equity and organizational ownership arrangements that may create a conflict of interest. Efforts are needed to make sure the information is accurate.
- Second, the CMS should provide further explicit guidance on how hospice surveyors should use publicly reported data to select charts for review and determine which patients and family will receive in-person visits.
- Third, the use and accuracy of deemed status surveys (ie, when the CMS allows an accredited agency hired by the hospice program to conduct the survey) should be scrutinized through mandatory joint visits by federal surveyors and the deemed status surveyors that hospice programs hire and pay.

...Hospices are part of complex systems in which payment models allow flexible innovation, but concerns surface when some programs choose to focus on profits rather



than care. The need for change is urgent to ensure that frail, older people receive high-quality care and that fraudulent care is rooted out of the system. Quality measures are important, but there is a need to improve integrity oversight. The time is now.

Publisher's note: Teno's article from 4/2023 recently came across my desk again and I was reminded how numerous hospice and palliative care leaders passionately advocated for additional integrity oversight. I find it interesting that CMS is now faced with several lawsuits about these same efforts.

36 **Hospice leaders applaud CMS's decision to reevaluate Special Focus Program, call for meaningful reforms**

National Alliance for Care at Home, Washington, DC and Alexandria, VA; Press Release; 2/14/25

Effective February 14, 2025, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has ceased the implementation of the Hospice Special Focus Program (SFP) so that CMS may further evaluate the program. This decision is a positive move acknowledging that the current approach is not working as intended. The hospice community has long advocated for strong oversight and patient protections, but the SFP, as implemented, was deeply flawed, unlawful, and harmful to the very patients it was meant to protect. A multi-state coalition of hospices and hospice associations took legal action in January to challenge the program, citing its misrepresentation of hospice compliance records, misleading data, and jeopardized access to high-quality end-of-life care. The flawed algorithm behind the SFP failed to distinguish fraudulent providers from reputable ones, disproportionately penalized well-established hospices, and ignored repeated warnings from congressional leaders and industry stakeholders. ... Now that CMS is reassessing its approach, there is an opportunity to ensure that oversight efforts truly enhance patient protections without restricting access to trusted hospice providers. The National Alliance for Care at Home (the Alliance) and the National Partnership for Healthcare and Hospice Innovation (NPHI) remain committed to protecting access to



high-quality hospice care and ensuring that regulatory oversight is fair, transparent, and aligned with congressional intent. ... *[Click on the title's link to continue reading.]*

37 **Hospice Insights Podcast - Controlling the narrative: A new tactic for auditors and ALJs**

JD Supra; by Bryan Nowicki and Meg Pekarske; 2/19/25

Hospices that have gone through audits are familiar with certain recurring reasons why auditors deny claims. Two common reasons are the lack of support for a six-month prognosis and the insufficiency of the physician narrative. In this episode, Husch Blackwell’s Meg Pekarske and Bryan Nowicki discuss a new twist on these kinds of denials, and how hospices can strengthen their documentation to try to avoid them.

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A7 Technology and Innovations

38 **The human edge: How AI can assist but never replace**

JD Supra; by Ralph Losey; 1/29/25

The rise of artificial intelligence has evoked both awe and apprehension. The list of its potential contributions seems endless. Yet, whispers of fear persist in our conversations: *What if AI surpasses us? What if it replaces us entirely?* These fears, while understandable, stem from a fundamental misunderstanding of what AI is—and what it is not. While AI may outperform humans in specific analytical domains, .. it can never replicate the full spectrum of what it means to be human. Far from being a threat to humanity, AI—when governed responsibly—offers a transformative tool to amplify our potential, not a rival to our existence. *[Click on the title's link to continue reading.]*

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A8 Speed of Change, Resiliency, and Re-Culture

39 **'It's not about technology or dashboards': What health systems need from IT execs next**

Becker's Health IT; by Laura Dyrda; 2/4/25

Health system IT leaders are entering a new era of leadership amid transformational technology platform purchases, artificial intelligence integration and cybersecurity advancements. But being the most technically proficient no longer guarantees leaders the top role. ... Healthcare IT leaders can become distracted by the bells and whistles of new technology and move forward without considering the patient experience.

... Staying close to the health system's mission is critical for IT leaders, and [Christopher Hutchins, senior vice president and chief data and analytics officer at Lifepoint Health] ties the technology back to patient care. He prioritizes his teammates and colleagues, listening carefully to what they need.

Notable mentions: James Forrester, Chief Technology Officer at University of Rochester (NY) Medical Center; Donna Roach, CIO of University of Utah Health; and Christopher Hutchins, senior vice president and chief data and analytics officer at Lifepoint Health

40 **4 critical mistakes to avoid during your workday project**

Becker's Hospital Review; In collaboration with Healthcare IT Leaders; 2/3/25

The success of a Workday implementation doesn't just hinge on technology but on people. According to recent research, up to 80% of digital transformation initiatives fail.

... For organizations looking to avoid these pitfalls, here are four critical staffing mistakes to avoid as outlined in our Workday Resource Planning & Staffing Guide:

- Mistake #1: Failing to Backfill Critical Positions ...
- Mistake #2: Insufficient Legacy System Support ...
- Mistake #3: Underestimating Change Management Resources ...
- Mistake #4: Inadequate Post-Implementation Planning ...

41 **4 phrases successful leaders intentionally use to motivate their teams**

Forbes; by Dr. Cheryl Robinson; 2/1/25

... Great leaders understand that their words can shape company culture, influence behavior and impact employee engagement; it's about delivering messages with clarity and intent. The tone, phrasing and timing of communication can energize a team or deflate morale. A well-placed word of encouragement can spark motivation, while careless criticism can hinder progress. Whether providing constructive feedback or



navigating tough conversations, leaders who speak with intention create a culture where employees feel valued and **driven** to contribute their best. ... 4 Phrases Successful Leaders Use:

- Phrase One: "I trust you to handle this." ...
- Phrase Two: "How can I support you in reaching this goal?"
- Phrase Three: "Let's learn from this and improve."
- Phrase Four: "Great job on X. Your effort really made a difference in Y."

42 **17 coaches on how to address leadership blind spots**

Forbes; by Expert Panel - Forbes Coaches Council; 2/12/25

... Here, 17 Forbes Coaches Council members discuss leadership blind spots they encounter in their work with leadership clients and strategies for addressing them. Their insights below provide tools for becoming a more self-aware, adaptive and effective leader.

1. Dedicate Time To Personal Development ...
2. Slow Down And Listen For True Intent ...
3. Assign Responsibilities For Executing Strategic Plans ...
4. Remember To Develop New Strengths ...
5. Talk Through Tough Situations ...
6. Recognize What Makes You Different ...
7. Seek Feedback On How Your Actions Affect Others ...
8. Become Aware Of How You Communicate ...
9. *[Continue reading]*

43 **Why being trustworthy is a leadership hack that drives success**

Inc.; by Yufie Ren; 2/20/25

Leaders who cultivate trust can significantly reduce employee churn and improve



organizational performance. ... In an era of rapid change, when teams look to leaders for stability and direction, trust is the invisible currency that fuels organizational success. ... Fortunately for managers – and workers – there’s a lot of research into how to be a more trustworthy leader. Here are a few insights:

- Empower your team ...
- Be fair and transparent ...
- Promote collaboration ...
- Measure and manage trust. Implementing regular surveys or feedback sessions can help assess and manage trust levels within an organization. Consider integrating trust metrics into performance evaluations to emphasize their importance.

Editor's note: Pair this with today's article, "[Interdisciplinary strategies for establishing a trusting relation as a pre-requisite for existential conversations in palliative care: a grounded theory study.](#)"

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A9 The Human Factor

44 [What do you say to a friend who is dying](#)

Equity Atlas; 2/12/25

It’s a situation no one wants to find themselves in – facing the imminent death of a friend. The emotions that come with this can be overwhelming, leaving you at a loss for words. You may find yourself grappling with what to say, how to act, and how to provide support during such a difficult time. In this article, we will explore some insights on what to say to a friend who is dying, as well as provide guidance on how to navigate this delicate and heartbreaking situation.



45 [**Mayo Clinic Hospice to present improv show on end-of-life care at Marion Ross theater**](#)

Albert Lea Tribune; 2/18/25

In honor of Mayo Clinic Hospice celebrating 45 years of service to Southeast Minnesota, in collaboration with Danger Boat Productions, the Naeve Health Care Foundation, and the Mayo Clinic Dolores Jean Lavins Center for Humanities in Medicine, invites the community to attend "End-of-Life: Live and Unscripted." The event will be held at the Marion Ross Theatre from 6 to 7 p.m. March 27, with doors opening at 5:30 p.m. This unique improv show aims to bring the community together for an evening of laughter and learning. Attendees will gain insights into advanced care planning, important end-of-life care considerations and ways to support the community during end-of-life stages.

Editor's note: Though readers surely will not be able to attend, we post this to spark your collaborations for community engagement and education through the arts.

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A10 Highlighted Articles of Interest

46 [**CareFirstNY announces the loss of beloved CEO, Tali Sutton**](#)

CareFirstNY, Painted Post, NY; 2/5/26

It is with tremendous sadness that we announce that Tali Sutton, CEO of CareFirstNY, experienced a sudden and unexpected medical emergency on Monday, February 3. True to her giving spirit, she is an organ donor and will pass along her final gift of life to others in need. Tali's belief in CareFirstNY, her authenticity, and her friendship created a bright light that united many people across our region. As a leader, Tali instilled a passionate culture of understanding, positivity, and trust that will be deeply missed. ... CareFirstNY's patient care services will remain uninterrupted at this time; we will share additional information as available and appropriate. For those who would like to make a contribution to Tali's memory, please visit our [Donation Page](#) for more information.

47 [**What's keeping CFOs up at night?**](#)

Becker's Hospital CFO Report; by Alan Condon; 2/14/25

As health system CFOs chart their course for 2025, they face an increasingly complex financial landscape marked by mounting labor costs, tightening margins, shifting payer dynamics and an evolving regulatory environment. ... [Several] CFOs recently joined the "Becker's CFO and Revenue Cycle Podcast" to discuss the trends they're watching most



closely — and the strategies they're deploying to stay ahead. [Key items include the following: labor shortages (key theme); major investments in ambulatory care facilities; AI to support operations and service; physician partnerships; shift from fee for service to value-based care; clinical labor; malpractice litigation; growth of Medicare Advantage programs; staffing shortages; inflation; reimbursements; providing care to underinsured patients; Medicaid supplemental funding programs; "disruptors" by private equity and "other nontraditional players"; uncertainty of federal and state regulation changes.]

48 **5,200 job cuts at HHS: What to know**

Becker's Hospital Review; by Madeline Ashley; 2/14/25

The Trump administration on Feb. 13 ordered HHS to lay off "nearly all" of its 5,200 probationary employees, *The Associated Press* reported Feb. 14. In a National Institutes of Health department meeting recording obtained by the AP, an NIH office director said some probationary employees with specialized skills might be retained. Affected employees were notified via email on the afternoon of Feb. 13. Many probationary employees are people who have worked for the federal government for about one to two years, before gaining civil service protections. Some probationary employees are veteran staffers who may have been recently promoted, according to the AP.

49 **[Argentina] Government dismantles National Cancer Institute's Palliative Care Program**

Time.News; 2/24/25

As Javier Milei's administration embarks on a controversial agenda aimed at reshaping Argentina's public health system, a profound and alarming shift has taken place: the dismantling of the National Cancer Institute's Palliative Care Program. This strategic move threatens the welfare of thousands of cancer patients and poses dire implications for the healthcare system at large.

- The Consequences of Policy Changes ...
- Funding and Personnel Cuts ...
- A National Challenge: Palliative Care Access ...



- Concerning Statistical Trends and Their Implications ...
- *Click on the title's link for more information*

50 **CIO hiring on the rise: How to land a top tech exec role in 2025**

CIO; by David Weldon; 2/25/25

Job opportunities are picking up for CIOs and other IT leaders in 2025, but so are expectations, with AI, change acceleration, and business transformation at the top of most companies' wish lists. Early returns on 2025 hiring for IT leaders suggest a robust market. For some recruitment firms, job growth for tech executive positions is at great heights.

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