More Therapy Increases the Likelihood of Nursing Facility Discharge

Increasing therapy for hip fracture patients, even by just one hour per week, may be beneficial, according to a new study conducted by researchers at Cornell, Brown and Harvard universities. The study also showed that increasing the level of therapy for skilled nursing residents recovering from hip fractures could increase their chances of being discharged.

For the study, researchers analyzed the effects of one extra therapy hour per week in over 480,000 hip fracture patients (who enrolled in Medicare between 2000 and 2009). Results showed that those who received the extra therapy were 3.1 percent more likely to leave the facility and go home than those who didn’t. These results, however, applied only to relatively healthy patients, according to the research team. Individuals with higher levels of impairment are not likely to benefit from increased therapy.

In general, explained lead researcher Hye-Young Jung, Ph.D., “there’s an assumption that additional therapy being provided in skilled nursing facilities does not improve patient outcomes, but there isn't a strong evidence-base.” The hope was that this study would fill that evidence gap. The information gathered could also be used to sway legislators and policy makers away from programs that cut therapy services. Therapy levels has been, and will likely continue to be, a hot topic in long term care.

Click here to view the full article from McKnight’s Long Term Care News.

Researchers Recommend Screening Nursing Home Residents for B12 Deficiency

A recent study done in Canada showed that vitamin B12 deficiency is common among seniors living in long term care facilities. Vitamin B12 deficiency has been linked with depression, dementia and anemia. In seniors, this issue is often caused by medications that interfere with the vitamin’s absorption.

The study included residents of eight different facilities in Ontario, Canada. Researchers found that when admitted, 14 percent of the residents were B12 deficient and another 33 percent had levels below the optimal numbers. When tested a year later, 4 percent of residents had developed a vitamin B12 deficiency, while those who were previously recognized as deficient and had received treatment saw improvements in their levels.

“The negative effects of a B12 deficiency for an at-risk community such as elderly adults in long term care should be a vital concern ... and warrants consideration of mandatory B12 screening at admission,” stated Heather Keller, research chair of nutrition and aging at the University of Waterloo, in a recent statement.

A simple blood screening upon admission and each year could help solve this problem, according to researchers. By monitoring vitamin B12 levels in residents’ blood can allow care providers to prevent the negative side effects that can come with the deficiency.

Click here for more information from HealthDay News.
Is ‘Antivirulence’ the Answer to Failing Antibiotics?

Virulent strains of bacteria are the ones that produce “virulence factors”—small molecules and proteins that convert a benign bacterium into a pathogen. These factors are the difference between E. coli that are helpful members of our stomach microbiome and the E. coli that cause terrible illnesses that target the digestive tract.

According to a recent article posted on Futurity.org, “Virulence factors allow bacteria to evade the human immune system, to infect tissues and cells, and to establish a foothold within the body. Without them, bacteria would be rapidly cleared by the immune system and unable to establish an infection.”

An assistant professor of chemistry at St. Louis’s Washington University, Tim Wencewicz, believes it would be a more effective use of our time to be looking for agents that block virulence factors, rather than continuing to search for ones that kill bacteria all together. It is his belief that antivirulence antibiotics could eventually replace failing bactericidal medications.

Wencewicz explained that the megadoses of broad spectrum antibiotics given to patients apply tremendous selective pressure to bacterial communities—bringing about opportunities for resistant by eradicating all susceptible ones. Antivirulence antibiotics, however, would apply much less pressure but would still be able to suppress a pathogen’s growth while the immune system takes time to recognize and clear it out.

“We could give antivirulence antibiotics to people with healthy immune systems, who would be able to clear infections with this assistance,” said Wencewicz, “and traditional antibiotics combined with antivirulence therapies to people with compromised immune systems, who really need them.”

To read more about Wencewicz’s studies, click here to read the full article.

U.S. Organ Transplants Reach 30K Milestone

The U.S. reached a major medical milestone last year—exceeding 30,000 organ transplants for the first time! Thanks to a steady increase of people willing to donate their organs to save the lives of others, 30,973 transplants took place in 2015, up 5 percent from the previous year. In fact, according to officials with the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN)—which coordinates U.S. transplant activities—there has been a slow but continuous rise in the number of transplants each year since 1988.

“This landmark achievement is a testament to the generosity of the American public to help others through donation, and their trust in the transplant system to honor their life-saving gift,” stated Betsy Walsh, president of OPTN.

Though increased donations and improved logistics at transplant centers have driven these numbers up in recent years, OPTN’s Chief Medical Officer David Klassen has noted that the number of individuals waiting for an organ continues to outdistance the number of donors each year—by quite a bit. With more than 121,000 patients in need of an organ, and nearly 80,000 of the individuals on the waiting list considered “active” (eligible for a transplant right away), people are dying each day waiting for an organ to become available.

“It’s great news that the number of transplants continues to increase each year,” said Jennifer Martin, vice president for constituent services at the National Kidney Foundation, a non-profit advocacy group. “But there’s still a lot of work to do to get organs for everyone who needs them.”

Thousands more lives could be saved each year if more individuals would take the time to become a registered donor, and make sure they make their wishes known.

For more information, click here to read the full article from USA Today.
January 2016 Observances

**This month is National Glaucoma Awareness Month:** More than three million people in the U.S. have glaucoma and according to the National Eye Institute this number will reach 4.2 million by 2030. Glaucoma is often called “the sneak thief of sight” as there are no noticeable symptoms (40 percent of vision can be lost without a person noticing) and once sight is lost it cannot be returned. This national observance was created to raise awareness of glaucoma symptoms, treatment and prevention. Visit [www.glaucoma.org](http://www.glaucoma.org) for more information.

AHCA/NCAL Information

**Time is Running Out to Apply for a National Quality Award!**

The Intent to Apply Deadline has passed, but you can still apply for a Quality Award. The [Quality Award website](http://www.qualityaward.org) has a number of resources designed to help facilities with the application process. Whether you are writing a Bronze, Silver or Gold application this year; there is something for you! **All applications must be submitted by January 28, 2016 to be considered.**

**Registration Today for the 2016 AHCA/NCAL Independent Owner (IO) Leadership Conference**

The AHCA/NCAL IO Leadership Conference—March 16-18, 2016—promises to be better than ever with all the networking opportunities you love and educational sessions you need in an energizing and engaging atmosphere you can’t get anywhere else. The town hall format allows you to discuss all the important issues with your peers as well as a slew of top-notch speakers. **First time registrants save an extra $150!** Earn up to 11.5 CEUs and enjoy the beauty of sunny San Diego at the stunning Manchester Grand Hyatt. Click here to learn more, see the complete agenda, and register today! **Deadline to Register is February 17, 2016.**

AHCA Encourages Passage of Rural Health Care Access Bill

AHCA released a [statement](http://www.ahca.org) earlier this week in full support of the Rural Health Care Connectivity Act of 2015 (S. 1916/H.R. 4111), legislation that would amend the Communications Act to permit skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) to apply for support from the Universal Service Fund’s Rural Health Care Program (RHCP). The RHCP provides funding for telecommunications and broadband services used to provide health care in rural areas and communities. S. 1916 specifies that SNFs be included in the definition of health care providers that are eligible to receive RHCP support. By Federal Communications Commission (FCC) interpretation, SNFs are currently not eligible to receive these funds as, though that is what AHCA believes the Telecommunications Act of 1996 originally intended.

AHCA Senior Vice President of Government Relations Clifton J. Porter II, stated, “Providers depend on the growing use of technology to deliver needed care and services to rural locations. Broadband networks are critical to accommodate the delivery and exchange of data, images, web streaming, and other health information that ensures the day-to-day care needs of residents and patients are met. Skilled nursing facilities will greatly benefit from access to enhanced telecommunications technologies. The American Health Care Association strongly supports this bill and urges swift passage of it by Congress.”

Upcoming AHCA Webinars

- [Core Elements of Antibiotic Stewardship in Nursing Homes](http://www.ahca.org)
  - February 2, 2016, 1:30 CT

IHCA Association Information

**Deadline Approaching! The Call for Presentations for the 66th Annual IHCA Convention & Expo Closing Soon!!**

Interested in being a session speaker at next year’s convention? There’s just over one week to submit! Proposals must be submitted by [February 1, 2016 to be considered](http://www.ihca.org). Please visit the [Speaker Information page](http://www.ihca.org) for more information. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Kelli Showalter or Debbie Jackson.

**The Prospectus for the 66th Annual IHCA Expo is Now Online!**

Want to be a part of one of the best attended long term care events in Illinois? IHCA’s 66th Annual Convention and Expo (September 12 – 15, 2016) will be here before you know it! The best locations go fast, so now is the time to reserve your booth space. Click here to view the prospectus. All space is reserved on a first come, first served basis. In order to
ensure the best selection for your booth(s), please complete and return the application, Attention: Kelli Showalter, as soon as possible.

**Please “Like” or “Follow” IHCA!**
We are continuously trying to build our social media presence! Please “Like” us on Facebook and “Follow” us on Twitter and LinkedIn. We’ve been working on growing our social media following in the past few months and want to keep that momentum going! Check it out today!

**IHCA’s New Development Director Wants to Meet You!!**
Kristin DiCenso, IHCA’s new Development Director, is hitting the road to get to know our members! If you would like her to visit your facility, want to learn more about how to make the most of your membership or discover how to get more involved with IHCA, please email Kristin at kdicenso@ihca.com or call 217-527-3609.

**Do You Have Any Photos You Would Like to Share?**
IHCA is always looking for photos from our members to use in association publications (like the upcoming 2016 IHCA Membership Directory & Buyers’ Guide, the Annual Report and more!). Do you have any photos that depict life in your facility that you would like to share? If so, contact Ashley Caldwell. *Each photo must be accompanied by a signed release form for any residents in the picture.*

**Coming Soon**
The 2015 IHCA Annual Report (electronic version) will be available soon. Stay tuned to www.ihca.com or the Weekly News Brief for more information.

The 2016 *IHCA Membership Directory & Buyers’ Guide* is headed your way in just a few weeks, so keep an eye on your mailbox for this comprehensive member resource!

**IHCA Member Spotlight**
**Calling IHCA Members – We Want to Feature Your Company Here!!!**
Are you looking for a way to reach our members? Well, this is a great way to do just that! Our Member Spotlight gives our members a space to let us know what their company (or facility) is all about! (And to brag a little too if you want to!) Your Company Information could be seen here in an issue later this year!!

Has your company recently celebrated a milestone? Accomplished a goal? Undergone a major change? Do you have positive stories or news to share? Would you just like to get your name out there among your fellow IHCA members?

IHCA is proud of our diverse membership and all of your successes and accomplishments. We are always looking for members to feature, here and in our other publications (like *LTC Today* magazine!). Any IHCA member can be featured in this section—facility, association member company, corporate office—all are welcome!

Ready to sign up for a member spotlight?! Contact Ashley Caldwell! Email acaldwell@ihca.com or give her a call today!

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