Wishing You Happy Holidays!

As another year is coming to a close, we at IHCA would like to wish all of our members and colleagues, and all of the residents we serve, a safe and happy holiday season!

Please note: The IHCA Office will be closed on December 25, 2017 and January 1, 2018 for the holidays. Additionally, News Brief, Regulatory Beat and the IHCA VCast will be taking a break next week. These communications pieces will return in the new year.

If you have any questions, or need any assistance, please don’t hesitate to reach out to IHCA staff via email, or give us a call.

Join Us for the 2018 IHCA Public Policy Forum!

IHCA will be hosting our fifth annual Public Policy Forum on Tuesday, January 30, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the President Abraham Lincoln Springfield Doubletree by Hilton. Attendees will hear presentations on IHCA’s policy and political agendas and the major gubernatorial candidates have been invited to speak. This year our main speaker will be Rich Miller, editor and author of Capitol Fax, Illinois’ premiere political publication. As an added bonus, participation is worth 3 CEs!

Registration is open for this always popular event, so mark your calendars now, and click here to register online (click here to view the brochure and registration form).

Thank you to Medline for sponsoring this program! Check out their website at www.medline.com for more information or contact John Cervino directly at jcervino@medline.com.

New Web Seminar Series Coming in 2018!

This past year, IHCA partnered with several other AHCA state affiliates to bring you the Proactive webinar series: Driving 5-Star & RoP Implementation Through a QAPI Approach. Now, in 2018, we are once again joining forces with our fellow
affiliates to bring you a new web seminar series: **Regulations, Red Tape and Resident Care – F-Tag Review Web Seminar Series: Comprehensive Review of Regulations and Interpretive Guidance for top F-Tags.**

This series will focus on reviewing the top deficiencies cited nationally with the new Long Term Care Survey Process (LTCSP). Each session will focus on top-cited F-Tag with a review of the regulation and an analysis of the associated Interpretive Guidance. A review of survey procedures, such as associated Critical Element Pathways and/or Surveyor Probes used to guide the investigative process will be discussed. Actual citation examples will be shared and discussed.

Tools to assist the facility interdisciplinary team in monitoring compliance and incorporating performance improvement activities into the facility QAPI processes will also be discussed.

Session speaker Amie Martin is an Occupational Therapist with twenty years’ experience serving in long term care leadership and as a clinical program specialist. She is certified in health care compliance and has successfully partnered with providers to improve clinical outcomes, compliance programs, medical record documentation and to reduce error rates under medical review.

The first web seminar in the series, **Comprehensive Review of Regulations and Interpretive Guidance for Infection Control/Antibiotic Stewardship F880-F881**, is scheduled for Wednesday, January 31, 2018 at 9:30 a.m.

For more information, check out the [IHCA Seminars page](#) on our [website](#).

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**Experts Offer Advice to Manage Holiday Blues, Depression**

In a recent *Provider* magazine article, author Amy Huaiquil passed along some expert advice courtesy of *Provider*’s recent Twitter chat—Depression and the Holiday Blues. During the chat, experts from Serenity HealthCare—an affiliate of Signature HealthCare and the American Health Care Association, and Richard Juman, PsyD, national director of psychological services at TeamHealth shared tips on staying connected with loved ones in long term and post-acute care (LT/PAC) centers and what they do to manage depression and keep the holiday blues at bay.

**Watch for the Signs**

While broad, holiday blues differs from person to person, stated Juman, “In care centers, it can manifest in many ways—from symptoms of depression to noncompliance with staff or refusing to attend facility holiday celebrations. Treat each resident as a unique person with their own ways of expressing sadness.”

Separation from families or loved ones and a tendency to focus on losses might cause the holiday blues in residents, said Serenity experts. Traditions are important to many, and being in a new place is a big change. Depression can be triggered this time of year as well, they added.

We’ve seen depression often triggered by memories of the holidays, and feelings of loss surface," they said. "It's these feelings that result in changes in mood and cognitive status."

**Caregivers Also at Risk**

Not surprisingly, noted Huaiquil, staff working in care centers can often show the same symptoms of holiday blues during the holiday season.

Juman explained that while people working in other settings often get to slow down at work, LT/PAC workers often don't. "There can be added pressure at work on top of the holiday stress that everyone is impacted by."

Experts at the American Health Care Association recommend letting staff know how much they are appreciated. "Look for ways to relieve stress, by offering time off if needed," they stated. It also helps to take the time to engage those staff without family and friends nearby to celebrate in the center’s events.

To support residents, the participants say that helping them focus on realistic ways to celebrate the holidays and even taking them outside may help with the holiday blues and Seasonal Affective Disorder.

For residents with depression, “Recognize that their depression may intensify over the holidays and provide extra support,” stated Juman. Don’t expect or force them to participate in holiday activities, and let them decide how much “holiday” they want.
Personal Memory Curator, Just One of the Jobs of the Future

As we look to the future, the job market is in a constant state of flux. As noted in a recent article in the Houston Chronicle, online shopping is reducing the number of retail jobs, self-driving vehicles will reduce the number of professional drivers, and robots are slashing manufacturing jobs worldwide. People who only possess high school diplomas, who already have a 14 percent unemployment rate, will find it even more difficult to get work, even at fast-food restaurants, which are installing payment kiosks and automated kitchens.

Cognizant, a technology services firm, published a list of "21 jobs of the future" last month. Those who prepare for these careers should find ready employment in the next decade, the company declared. Of the jobs they featured on their list, one of the less obvious, and most interesting, was that of memory curator.

“As virtual reality technology advances,” explained the article “and people live longer, personal memory curators will oversee the creation of computer-generated environments that allow the elderly to virtually go back in time and relive their fondest memories.”

“You will generate and manage the advance memory statement, and work with a team of researchers to blend content from personal data feeds and image banks to beta-test experiences agreeable to the client,” Cognizant researchers imagine the job description will read. “You will then create a specification for the virtual reality team to architect and create the sets, mood, historical time, etc.”

As technology expands and evolves, we continue to find ways to use it to the benefit of long term care providers and the residents they serve.

Critics Say Pressure to Lower Hospital Readmissions May Be Backfiring

Five years after financial penalties went into place for hospitals with high readmission rates, experts are questioning whether falling return rates mean patients actually are faring better. According to a recent analysis by STAT, some skeptics say fewer readmissions belie a darker truth — that hospitals are taking shortcuts, and in some cases compromising patient care, to avoid financial pain and public embarrassment.

Long term care providers, as hospitals' frequent care partners, have similarly been pressured to produce lower rehospitalization rates. One prominent researcher said that the only certainty from the readmissions focus thus far is that more scrutiny has been given to the need for better post-acute care.

One study showed that a large percentage of the reduction in readmissions following the Hospital Readmission Reduction Program has been attributable to changes in the way hospitals are describing their patients in claims data. By describing them as sicker, hospitals can increase their risk adjustments and reduce financial penalties.

Another recent study correlated the reduction in readmissions with an increase in 30-day and one-year mortality rates. According to STAT, the study suggested the program was backfiring for patients, keeping them out of the hospital and jeopardizing their health.

“Bad health policies, like bad drugs, have unanticipated side effects,” said Robert Yeh, M.D., a cardiologist at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center.

Yeh and co-author Eric Secemsky found that differences in hospital quality only marginally accounted for the readmission risk for patients with peripheral arterial disease, raising the question of whether financially penalizing hospitals makes any sense.

Yeh also stated that the only certainty at this point is that the readmissions program has focused more attention on the need for hospitals and their post-discharge partners to provide better follow-up care.
Targeting This Protein Could Prevent Alzheimer’s

Research has shown that individuals who carry the APOE4 genetic variant are at substantial risk for developing Alzheimer’s disease. There may now be a way to combat that risk, according to a recent study by researchers at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. They have discovered a specific compound that targets the APOE protein in the brains of mice and protects against damage caused by the Alzheimer’s protein amyloid beta.

“Scientists have been interested in APOE for years but there are only a few examples where researchers have targeted it with a compound in living animals,” said senior author David Holtzman, professor and head of the neurology department at Washington University in St. Louis and senior author of the study recently published in Neuron. “Our findings indicate that APOE is not just involved in Alzheimer’s risk and disease progression, but it could potentially be a real target for treatment or prevention.”

It is well-known that Alzheimer’s disease is marked by brain plaques made of amyloid beta, which start forming in the brain years before the characteristic symptoms of memory loss and confusion appear. APOE4 raises the risk of Alzheimer’s in part by encouraging amyloid beta to collect into damaging plaques. People with APOE4 face up to 12 times the risk of developing Alzheimer’s than the general population.

For this study, researchers studied mice genetically prone to develop amyloid plaques and that carry the human APOE4 genetic variant. The researchers targeted the APOE protein using a kind of DNA-based molecule—known as an antisense oligonucleotide—that interferes with the instructions for building the APOE protein.

Results showed that the mice that received the APOE antisense oligos had about half as many amyloid plaques as mice given saltwater. Each plaque triggered only half as much damage to nearby neurons, an indicator that the compound had prevented some of the neurological damage that leads to Alzheimer’s disease.

While these results are encouraging, researchers have noted that more work is needed before the compound can be evaluated in humans, as most healthy people are unlikely to be interested in taking a drug to prevent a disease that may never occur.

“If you wanted to target APOE to affect the amyloid process, the best thing would be to start before the plaques form,” Holtzman explained. “But even if you start later, you still may reduce the amount of damage caused by the plaques. Now that we have shown that it is possible to target APOE, we can start figuring out the best way to do it.”

For more details on this new research, click here to read the full article from Futurity.org.

Educational Resources: Medicare's Quality Improvement Organization Program

The Medicare’s Beneficiary Family Centered Care – National Coordinating Center (BFCC-NCC), in partnership with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), has recently launched a new educational initiative to raise awareness about Medicare’s Quality Improvement Organization Program and the free services offered to ensure high quality of care.

The national education campaign aims to raise awareness about the following Medicare rights and associated services:

1. The right to file a quality of care complaint for any concerns related to medical care;
2. The right to appeal a discharge from a hospital, skilled nursing facility, home health agency or hospice;
3. The right to request Immediate Advocacy to resolve concerns and get assistance in navigating the healthcare system.

A Medicare Rights Educational Resources webpage created for the initiative includes the following resources:

- PowerPoint Presentation (and script) that provides an overview of Medicare’s Quality Improvement Organization Program and the services available for Medicare beneficiaries to ensure receipt of high quality, safe health care.
- Sample Medicare Rights Announcements document that provides sample messages about Medicare rights, which may be copy/pasted in newsletters, social media platforms, blogs, emails, etc.
Frequently Asked Questions for Medicare Beneficiaries document that answers commonly asked questions regarding the appeal and complaint services offered by Medicare’s Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) Program – what services are provided, and what Medicare patients can expect when making the call to their QIO.

Contact Form to Request a Webinar that allows centers to request a webinar presentation for your organization. The presentation provides a step-by-step guide for filing a Quality of Care Complaint, a Discharge Appeal and for requesting Immediate Advocacy.

All of the services are completely free of charge and part of the CMS Quality Improvement Organization Program.

AHCA/NCAL Information

AHCA/NCAL National Quality Awards – Submit Your Application Today!

- National Quality Award Program submissions for all applicants are being accepted online.
- All applications and payments must be submitted via the online portal before February 1, 2018 at 8 p.m. EST.
- Application packets are available on the Bronze, Silver and Gold Award pages.

Click here for more information.

National Skilled Nursing Care Week 2018

Beginning in 2018, National Nursing Home Week will now be known as National Skilled Nursing Care Week (NSNCW). This year’s observance will be held May 13-19, so Save the Date!! The theme this year will be “Celebrating Life’s Stories,” which serves as a tribute to life’s most significant events, relationships and experiences, all of which shape the unique perspectives of residents, families, staff and volunteers in long term and post-acute care. For more information, click here.

AHCA/NCAL is Pleased to Offer Emergency Preparedness Tool at Exclusive, Members Only Rate

Nursing facilities (SNFs/NFs) and Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ICF/IID) must now comply with new sweeping regulations affecting their emergency preparedness planning. These requirements took effect November 15.

AHCA/NCAL is pleased to offer a tool titled “Emergency Preparedness Program (EPP) Customizable Plan for Long Term Care” that allows facilities to customize compliant plans, including:
- Emergency Preparedness Program Management Plan
- Communications Plan
- Procedures applicable to all hazard responses
- Incident Command System
- And more…

AHCA/NCAL members receive exclusive “member only” pricing of $395 for the EPP customizable plan – a savings of $100 off the regular price. The EPP plan from Russell Phillips & Associates includes:
- An electronic flash drive – Easily add your facility’s information to customize your plan.
- Hard copy of the documents – Provides hard copy worksheet-style documents of your plan.
- Binder with tabs prepared for insertion of customized plan – An invaluable resource that organizes your plan documents.
- A crosswalk between the new CMS regulations and the customizable EPP plan manual – This indispensable tool provides a clear-cut detailed comparison that shows how your facility’s EPP plan meets CMS requirements and demonstrates precise compliance to survey agencies and AHJs.
- Access to an information-packed 75-minute “how to” webinar conducted by Russell Phillips & Associates.

Be confident that you have an emergency preparedness plan that correlates to the new CMS guidelines. Order the customizable EPP plan today through the AHCA/NCAL Bookstore and save $100 off the regular $495 price.
AHCA to Host New Webinar Series – The Story of How Mountain Valley Achieved Quality Gold... and Beyond

Since its inception, the National Quality Award Program has honored more than 4,000 centers across the US with a Bronze Award, 767 centers with a Silver Award and 31 with a Gold Award. The tenets of the program are based on the esteemed Baldrige Performance Excellence Framework, which is known for its unwavering focus on excellence. At times, centers might feel it’s difficult to achieve this rigorous and demanding set of criteria.

In a new, 6-part webinar series, available exclusively to members on ahcancalED, AHCA tells the story of Mountain Valley—a small, 68-bed rural center in Kellogg, Idaho—and how they received not only the AHCA/NCAL Bronze, Silver and Gold National Quality Awards, but went on to receive the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award as well. Click here to find out more.

Registration for the 2018 AHCA/NCAL Quality Summit is Now Open!

Join your fellow long term and post-acute care professionals March 12-14, 2017 in New Orleans for a variety of educational sessions, association updates and networking opportunities! Deadline to Register is March 2, 2018. Click here for more.

Registration for the 2018 AHCA/NCAL Independent Owner Leadership Conference is Now Open!

AHCA/NCAL’s Independent Owner Leadership Conference is Jazzing Up the Path to Success. Join in on the fun March 14-16, 2018 (directly following the 2018 Quality Summit) in New Orleans. Get together with AL and SNF Independent Owners from across the country to discuss the issues that matter most to you. Hot Topics this year will include, ACOs, VBP, QRP measures and more. Earn up to 8.75 CEUs for attending. Deadline to Register is March 2, 2018. Click here for more.

Upcoming Webinar:

- Water Safety and Reducing the risk for Legionella in Nursing Homes | January 31, 2018 | 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. EDT

IHCA Information

IHCA VCast – Sponsored by NRC Health and CE Solutions

This week's episode featured IHCA Preferred Vendors NRC Health and CE Solutions. Coming soon: Past issues of the weekly VCast emails, with all of the appropriate links, will be available in the IHCA Resource Center. To access the resource center, simply log in to the member portal and click on Resources.

Infection Preventionist Specialized Training (IPCO) Now Available!

IHCA has partnered with AHCA to bring you a new quality improvement resource that will meet the new Infection Preventionist specialized training requirement finalized by CMS in the Requirements of Participation (RoP) for long term care centers. The Infection Preventionist Specialized Training (IPCO) course provides specialized training for healthcare professionals who seek to serve as Infection Preventionists. Through this course, individuals will be specially trained to effectively implement and manage an Infection Prevention and Control Program at their nursing center.

IHCA and AHCA are committed to ensuring nursing centers are fully prepared to meet the rigors of the new RoP requirements. This course is an online, self-study program with 23 hours of training. It includes online lectures, case studies and interactive components taught by an array of experts from around the country. To learn more, see the Infection Preventionist Specialized Training (IPCO) slides. To register, just click here.

2018 LTCNA Nursing Scholarship Application Deadline December 29!

Each year the Long Term Care Nurses Association (LTCNA) offers up to two (2) $1,000 scholarships to CNAs, LPNs and RNs wishing to advance their education. Click here to download the application.

LTCNA Offering Core Competency Sessions!

LTCNA is now offering a la carte competency training sessions with their simulation mannequin, Geri Manikin! Get your nurses the training they need right in your center! The cost will be dependent on the amount of time spent in the center. Charter Memberships are also still available for centers. The fee for the membership is $2,000 and the center will receive 24 hours (4 6-hour days) of simulation time over the course of the year. For more information contact Debbie Jackson at djackson@ihca.com or 800-252-8988.
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 a future issue!!

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

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