Happy New Year!!

Happy New Year from IHCA! Another year has officially begun and if last year was any indication, 2018 is sure to be a busy one. With emergency preparedness and the new RoPs still on our minds, and other regulatory and legislative issues waiting in the wings, the staff and board of IHCA will be working hard to ensure that the voice of our members, and long term care providers in general, is heard.

In the coming weeks, IHCA will be finalizing the 2017 IHCA Annual Report and the 2018 IHCA Membership Directory & Buyers’ Guide. We will keep you posted regarding both of these member publications.

If you have any questions, suggestions for publication/education session topics, etc. please do not hesitate to contact the IHCA office.

Four Ways to Revamp Work Culture in the New Year

The new year often brings a sense of renewal—a new year, a new start, a fresh chance to meet goals or make changes. In many of our long term care facilities this could mean focusing in on goals like tackling the staff turnover issue or increasing profitability. Or, it might be the hope that resident, staff and family satisfaction ratings will be better than ever this year or that your center might finally get that 5-star rating…

The common thread with many of these goals, as noted by Dr. Eleanor Barbera in her The World According to Dr. El blog on the McKnight’s website, “is deepening the attention paid to the people in our personal and business lives.”

"When staff members don't feel valued, or inspired by the mission of the company, turnover increases, making it virtually impossible to have high satisfaction scores and 5-star ratings," said Barbera. "Repeatedly recruiting and training new staff cuts into profit margins and damages worker morale."

No matter what are roles are in long term care, Barbera points out, there are steps we can all take to enhance the way we treat others that will have a positive impact on workplace culture.

- **Reevaluate mission and culture.** Readers in a position to revise the organizational customs as a whole might enlist experienced guides in the process. A consulting and coaching company can evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a health care organization and provide ongoing support to meet goals throughout the culture change process. A consulting team can ensure that bumps in the road don't become dead ends.
• **Investigate known culture change programs.** Thankfully, there are many people in our field who have undertaken the daunting task of creating a more gratifying long term care environment while still following regulations. The new year is an excellent time to take a class with the Pioneer Network or the Eden Alternative, or to learn more about The Green House Model at their 1/9 webinar.

• **Promote kindness.** If your job in long term care doesn't allow you the opportunity to change the overall organizational framework, you can still be an important influence on others with whom you interact by focusing on kindness.

• **Be steadfast.** As consulting psychologist and team member, I'd characterize my role as “a rock in times of turbulence.” I try to be pleasant, upbeat, reliable, discrete and efficient. I offer hugs to (female) staff members who need them. All of us, from the housekeeper to the CEO, can make a positive contribution to organizational culture by being aware of how we present ourselves to our coworkers. If we can't be especially kind, we can be steadfast.

Every long term care center is its own little world—and while we may not be able to change the universe, we can perhaps improve our little corner of the world, our work environment or someone else’s day.

For more information, [click here](#) to read Barbera’s full blog post.

### New Blood Pressure Guidelines Released

The guidelines for the detection, prevention, management and treatment of high blood pressure were recently changed for the first time in more than a decade. The new guidelines, released in November, were composed by the American College of Cardiology (ACC) and the American Heart Association (AHA) and have officially lowered the threshold for when high blood pressure should be treated with medication—at 130/80 mm Hg rather than 140/90. They have also changed the blood pressure categories, eliminating the category of prehypertension, and categorizing patients as having either Normal, Elevated, Stage 1 Hypertension, Stage 2 Hypertension or a Hypertensive Crisis (see below).

### Blood Pressure Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY</th>
<th>SYSTOLIC mm Hg (upper number)</th>
<th>DIASTOLIC mm Hg (lower number)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NORMAL</td>
<td>LESS THAN 120</td>
<td>and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEVATED</td>
<td>120 – 129</td>
<td>and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 1</td>
<td>130 – 139</td>
<td>or 80 – 89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 2</td>
<td>140 OR HIGHER</td>
<td>or 90 OR HIGHER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS (consult your doctor immediately)</td>
<td>HIGHER THAN 180</td>
<td>and/or HIGHER THAN 120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to an [ACC article](#), it is estimated that the new definitions will result in nearly half of the U.S. adult population (46 percent) having high blood pressure, with the greatest impact expected among younger people. Additionally, the guideline authors noted, the prevalence of high blood pressure is expected to triple among men under age 45, and double among women under 45. However, noted Paul K. Whelton, MB, MD, MSc, FACC, lead author of the guidelines, only a small increase in expected in the number of adults requiring antihypertensive medication.

"We want to be straight with people," he stated. “If you already have a doubling of risk, you need to know about it. It doesn't mean you need medication, but it's a yellow light that you need to be lowering your blood pressure, mainly with non-drug approaches."
These new guidelines were created to account for complications that can occur at lower numbers and to allow for earlier intervention. The experts who worked on the revisions believe that high blood pressure should be treated earlier, often with simple lifestyle changes, to avoid future complications. The guidelines also stress proper technique to measure blood pressure (BP), recommend home BP monitoring and highlight the value of training health care providers to reveal “white-coat hypertension,” as well as proper medication prescribing and identifying socioeconomic status and psychosocial stress as risk factors for high blood pressure.

The guideline’s authors believe that “the 2017 ACC/AHA hypertension guideline has the potential to increase hypertension awareness, encourage lifestyle modification and focus antihypertensive medication initiation and intensification on US adults with high CVD risk.”

To find out more, click here to read the full article from the ACC or visit the American Heart Association’s website, www.heart.org.

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**Seniors More Likely to Skip Nursing Homes Where Staff Skip Flu Vaccines**

According to a recent poll, almost three-fourths of seniors said they would be less likely to choose a nursing home if they found that a large share of its staff had not been vaccinated against the flu.

The survey—conducted by AARP and the University of Michigan was completed by more than 2,000 Americans between the ages of 50 and 80. Results showed that nearly three-quarters of participants believed that all long term care facility staff should be required to get the flu vaccine, and more than 60 percent said that all residents in nursing homes and assisted living facilities should be vaccinated too.

In light of the results, it seems that letting employees opt out of vaccines could hurt patient health and a company’s bottom line. According to the poll, if one-third or more of a facility’s staff weren’t vaccinated, 40 percent of participants said they’d be “much less” likely to choose that center for themselves or their loved ones. And, another third stated that they would be “slightly less” likely to choose it.

Older individuals, and those with chronic health conditions, are especially vulnerable to the influenza virus and at a greater risk for developing flu-related complications (like pneumonia). In spite of this, the CDC has reported that only 68 percent of workers in long term care settings get the flu vaccine, compared to more than 90 percent of hospital workers.

“We've finally gotten to the point in the last few years where most inpatient hospitals require their staff to get vaccinated against the flu, or at least strongly promote it,” said Preeti Malani, M.D., director of the poll and a professor of internal medicine at the University of Michigan. “These results suggest that other types of care facilities should do the same to protect vulnerable patients — or potentially risk losing business.”

For more information, click here to read the full article from McKnight’s.

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**Boston’s Seniors Gather to Celebrate First Night**

More than 2,000 senior Boston residents gathered at the Seaport World Trade Center last Thursday afternoon to celebrate the new year during the city’s senior First Night event. The annual event is hosted by Mayor Martin J. Walsh and the City’s Commission on Affairs of the Elderly. It is the biggest event of the year for local seniors.

For a number of years the Senior First Night event has been offering Boston’s elderly community an opportunity to kick up their heels and celebrate the beginning of a new year with their peers. The event includes food, music and fellowship for the city’s seniors who attend.

One attendee, who has been attending the celebration for nearly 10 years, brought along her niece, who was visiting from out of town. Marianne Pinkham, who works at a community center for older people in her hometown, said she was completely taken aback by the number of people in the ballroom.

“We just don’t have anything where there’s 2,000 people all in one place,” she said. “To see all of these vibrant people out having a great time is wonderful.”
Mayor Walsh addressed the crowd before leading the New Year’s countdown and thanked Boston’s seniors for helping to shape the community and setting an example for younger residents.

“You are the backbone of our city,” he said. “You are the people that grew up in our neighborhoods, you’re the people who stayed in our city, [and] you’re the people who made our neighborhoods strong.”

Click here to read the full article from The Boston Globe.

**January 2018 Observances**

*January is National Glaucoma Awareness Month:* Organized by the Glaucoma Research Foundation, this month long observance was instituted to raise awareness of glaucoma symptoms, treatment and prevention. Visit [www.glaucoma.org](http://www.glaucoma.org) for more information.

**AHCA/NCAL Information**

2017 AHCA/NCAL Annual Report

AHCA/NCAL President and CEO Mark Parkinson and SVP of Quality and Regulatory Affairs David Gifford would like to share some highlights from 2017 and areas to focus on in the new year. Take a few minutes to watch and share their [video](#) update.

NCAL Connections – Resource Recap

Last week’s issue of NCAL Connections featured a recap of some of the resources NCAL offered their assisted living members throughout 2017. These included: NCAL’s [Customer Relations](#) webpage, “Bullying Among Seniors (and not the high school kind)”, a [checklist](#) on resident sexual consent, new assisted living information in the AHCA/NCAL State of the States tool, various webinars and more! Check out NCAL’s [website](#) for more great resources.

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.

Use Gero Nurse Prep to Increase Competency in Geriatric Nursing Care

AHCA/NCAL [Gero Nurse Prep](#) does much more than just prepare RNs to take the [American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC)](#) board certification exam in gerontological nursing. It increases experienced RNs’ knowledge of gerontological nursing practice. Gero Nurse Prep students see a whopping 24 percent average increase on their pre- and post-test scores. Watch this [video](#) to learn more about AHCA/NCAL Gero Nurse Prep or check out the [course preview](#) to get a quick view of this engaging on-line curriculum designed to increase gerontological nursing knowledge and help RNs pass the ANCC exam.

**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](#).
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 Jazing 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 CEs 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

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.

IHCA VCast – Sponsored by RxPERTS Pharmacy
This week’s episode featured IHCA’s Bill Bell and Debbie Jackson discussing the information given at the most recent CMS Region 5 provider meeting. 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.

F-Tag Review Web Seminar Series: Comprehensive Review of Regulations and Interpretive Guidance for top F-Tags
IHCA is once again joining forces with our fellow affiliates to bring you a new web seminar series. This year’s series will focus on reviewing the top deficiencies cited nationally with the new Long Term Care Survey Process (LTCSP). Each session will include discussion on top-cited F-Tags with a review of the regulation, an analysis of the associated Interpretive Guidance, a review of survey procedures and more.

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.

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.

**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!