State of the State Address
The State of the State address was given yesterday in front of a crowd of legislators and constitutional officers. The newly elected governor hammered home the quest to make Illinois competitive while empowering its people. Legislators scanned the Governor’s policy agenda while he promised a raise in minimum wage followed by a pro-business package and a seven-year time frame, which was not received well by the majority party. Rauner continued his address by laying out his proposal for “employee empowerment zones” and the fight against government unions being able to influence public officials through campaign donations. But he didn’t stop there. In order to close this “special interest loophole” the governor proposed a prohibition on political contributions for businesses with state contracts to all organizations with a state collective bargaining agreement and organizations funded by entities receiving state Medicaid funds. Job growth, workers compensation reform, property tax relief, term limits and increased education funding accompanied the above issues. To read a copy of Governor Rauner’s speech click here.

Researchers Believe Drug Makers’ Data on Side Effects Is Not Up to Par
A recent study by Institute of Safe Medication Practices, a nonprofit group that focuses on drug safety issues, found that the main system for keeping track of dangerous side effects of prescription medications is seriously flawed. Researchers who performed the study (which analyzed more than 847,000 case reports) showed that drug makers are submitting incomplete information about the side effects to the FDA—with approximately half of the reports of serious side effects submitted by drug manufacturers meeting the basic standards for completeness. On the other hand, reports submitted by the FDA were found to meet the basic standards 85 percent of the time.

Though the reporting of serious side effects is voluntary for doctors and patients, it is required that drug companies notify the FDA if they become aware of an adverse event caused by one of their medications. According to the lead author of the report and senior scientist at the Institute stated that they “know it is feasible to do reasonably complete reports,” and that the reason that these reports not being done well is “lack of due diligence by the manufacturers.”

A spokesman for the FDA acknowledged the issue and indicated that improving the system was something they are looking into, but the voluntary nature of the reporting by doctors and patients may make it difficult. The spokesman also noted that the FDA was working on several initiatives to better analyze the reports and search for potential problems.

For more detailed information about this issue, click here to read the full article from the New York Times.
MRI Probe Detects Alzheimer’s Disease at Early Stage

According to a new study by researchers at Northwestern University, new MRI technology can identify signs of Alzheimer’s disease before symptoms begin to manifest. The probe pairs a magnetic nanostructure (MNS) with an antibody that seeks amyloid beta brain toxins, which are responsible for the onset of the disease. Unlike conventional technology, this probe detects toxic amyloid beta oligomers rather than plaques, which show up in later stages of Alzheimer’s when possible therapeutic interventions would be too late.

These amyloid beta oligomers attach the synapses of neurons and are believed to be the the culprit behind Alzheimer’s disease and subsequent memory loss. Over time, these build up and stick together, forming the amyloid plaques that current probes target—but the new technology may allow for detection of oligomers years before plaques are ever detected. There is also evidence that the new technique may improve memory by “handcuffing” the toxins and stopping them from doing more damage.

“Using MRI, we can see the toxins attached to neurons in the brain,” stated William L. Klein, professor of neurobiology at Northwestern and coauthor of the study. “We expect to use this tool to detect this disease early and to help identify drugs that can effectively eliminate the toxin and improve health.”

New Study Shows that Suffering at End of Life is Getting Worse

Kaiser Health News recently featured a study that shows that despite recommendations to improve end of life care and efforts to grow hospice and palliative programs in the United States, the number of individuals experiencing pain in the last year of life has not gone down at all—in fact, it increased by more than 10 percent between 1998 and 2010. Additionally, the number of people experiencing depression in the final year of life increased by more than 26 percent in the same time frame.

The study included more than 7,000 patients who passed away while enrolled in the national Health and Retirement study, a survey that focused on Americans ages 50 and older. After each participant’s death their family was asked questions about their loved one’s end-of-life experience. Questions about pain, depression and periodic confusion were included, all of which increased in prevalence during the 10 year analysis.

Dr. Joanne Lynn from the Center for Elder Care and Advanced Illness at the Altarum Institute believes that one reason for these increases is that doctors have access to a greater range of treatments, which can lengthen the dying process without actually curing the patient.

“We throw more medical treatment at patients who are on their way to dying, which keeps them in a difficult situation for much, much longer,” stated Lynn. “We’ve increased the number of people put on ventilators and kept in hospitals, and we simply have more treatments that are possible to offer.”

In light of this research, researchers believe that the U.S. has a long way to go in improving end-of-life care. Click here to read the full article from Kaiser Health News for more information.

Research Shows that Non-drug Interventions Can Help Reduce Delirium

A recent study published in JAMA Internal Medicine showed that delirium can be prevented without the use of medications, leading to better outcomes and shorter hospitalization periods. According to recent research, up to 64 percent of hospitalized elderly patients can develop delirium.

The study, done by researchers at Brigham Women’s Hospital and Hebrew SeniorLife’s Institute for Aging Research, includes the analysis of twelve hospital studies that involved multi-component non-pharmacologic interventions—such as improved nutrition and hydration, better sleep quality, daily exercise and therapeutic activities to improve cognition.
Preventing delirium through non-drug interventions, and thereby avoiding injuries from falls and other issues, could save care providers and the overall health care system $10 billion a year. For more information, see the full article from McKnight’s Long Term Care News.

February 2015 Observances

**Tomorrow is National Wear Red Day:** Heart Disease is the top killer of women in the U.S. One in three women dies of heart disease or stroke. Organized by the American Heart Association, National Wear Red Day invites everyone to show their awareness and their commitment to the cause. [Click here](#) for more information.

**This week is Pride in Food Service Week:** Long term care centers rely on their food service employees to offer quality meals to their residents while keeping in mind their dietary and nutritional needs and restrictions. Take the opportunity this week to honor your dietary managers and other dietary staff for their dedication and hard work! [Click here](#) for more information.

**February is National Senior Independence Month:** This month long observance was created to help seniors maintain control of their daily lives. National Senior Independence Month encourages seniors to evaluate not only their living situation, but their daily routines as well, and to decide if changes are necessary for a better lifestyle.

AHCA/NCAL Information

**Provider Magazine Now Accepting Nominations for their 20 To Watch!**

*Provider* is now accepting nominations for its third annual 20 To Watch list. AHCA/NCAL is looking for rising stars from member facilities—from housekeeping staff to CEO—who exemplify the dedication, hard work and compassionate care required for a commitment to improving the quality of life for all residents. Finalists will be featured in a summer issue of Provider and commemorated on our special “20 To Watch” website. [Nominations are due April 17](#). For more information on how to submit nominations, [click here](#).

**“Bring on the Fiesta” for National Nursing Home Week 2015**

AHCA/NCAL has announced the theme for this year’s National Nursing Home Week (NNHW), May 10–16, 2015 – *Bring on the Fiesta!*

Your facility staff and residents are sure to have a good time focusing on “Familia, Vida and Amor” (family, life, love) throughout the week. Look for the Planning Guide and Product brochure in mid-February and check out the NNHW webpage [here](#).

More information to come.

**One Week Left to Apply for Silver or Gold Quality Award! Submit Your Application Today!**

Time is running out to apply for an AHCA/NCAL National Quality Award! [Silver and Gold Applications are due next Thursday, February 12, 2015](#)! This award program recognizes high-performing long term care centers across the nation. The program three-step program is based on the core values and criteria of the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program. Each level has its own distinct rigor and requirements for quality and performance excellence.

**Early Bird Registration for the 2015 Independent Owner Leadership Conference Coming Up Soon**

The Independent Owner (IO) Leadership Conference, scheduled for March 11-13, 2015 in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, is a fantastic opportunity to network, learn new strategies that will help you meet your 2015 goals and earn CE’s. This year's theme is How To Survive Medicaid Managed Care as an Independent Owner. [The deadline to register prior to the event is February 9, 2015](#). [Click here](#) to view the agenda and [here](#) for registration information.
Registration for the 7th Annual AHCA/NCAL Quality Symposium Extended – One More Week to Register!!

Don’t miss next month’s Quality Symposium! In today’s rapidly changing world, performance excellence is ever more central to success. This makes it critical to build on our momentum and accelerate the pace of change.

The AHCA/NCAL Quality Symposium is a fantastic opportunity for networking with your peers and earning up to 15.5 CEUs through Intensives education sessions. New deadline to register is next Thursday, February 12, 2015!

February Webinars
AHCA/NCAL offers webinars each month on a variety of important topics. February webinars include:

- **HEY, HELP ME HERE... Managing Challenging Behaviors Including Falls!**
  February 19, 2015

IHCA Association Information
Navigating the Changing Managed Care Landscape – Part Two Has Been Rescheduled!!!
Due to unexpected circumstances the Navigating the Changing Managed Care Landscape – Part 2 web seminar originally scheduled for Tuesday, February 10 has been rescheduled for Wednesday, February 11. The time for the web seminar will remain the same—10 to 11:30 a.m. We apologize for any inconvenience and thank you for your understanding.

Just Over a Week Left to Submit Speaker Proposals for the 65th Annual Convention & Expo!!
The deadline for submissions for the online Call for Presentations for the 65th Annual Convention and Expo was extended due to an unfortunate online glitch that caused the system to fail. The new deadline is next Friday, February 13, 2015. If you submitted your proposal prior to January 21, 2015, was not captured by the online system. If you submitted a speaker proposal before yesterday, please resubmit your information in order to be considered for the event in September. Click here to access the online form. We apologize for any inconvenience and appreciate your patience with this process. If you have any questions, please contact Kelli Showalter at kshowalter@ihca.com or Debbie Jackson at djackson@ihca.com.

IHCA's Destination Education is Back!
IHCA is bringing back our Destination Education program, and this time we’re offering you the chance to hit the seas with an Alaskan Cruise! This seven-night cruise aboard the Carnival Legend will depart Seattle, Washington on July 14, 2015 and head up north to Alaska with several stops along the way. Education sessions with our “educator in residence” for the trip, Susan Gardiner, will cover various aspects of quality in long term care and participants can earn 10 CEs for attending. Click here to view the brochure for more information.

Send Us Your Stories!! Your Facility Could be Featured in the Next Issue of LTC Today!
Planning in well underway for the Spring/Summer 2015 issue of IHCA’s association magazine, LTC Today. Do you have a new program or a facility event you would like to see featured? Do you have a particular resident who you think deserves to be recognized? If so, contact Ashley Caldwell at acaldwell@ihca.com and you may see your story in an upcoming issue!

IHCA Member Spotlight
IHCA Associate Member – Litwiller Consulting LLC
Al Litwiller of Litwiller Consulting is a long-standing IHCA member. He has a B.S. in Education, a Masters in Health Administration (M.H.A) and he offers a wealth of knowledge and experience to his clients. For years Litwiller has dedicated himself to the long term care profession—acting as educator, regulator, nursing home administrator and consultant.

Litwiller Consulting LLC was formed as a result of high demand for quality training—that was also convenient and affordable—that Litwiller witnessed over the years. Using his background in the profession and his experience as an instructor, Litwiller has put together a repertoire of educational sessions on a number of today’s pertinent issues—Infection Control, Documentation Regulations, Leadership & Supervision and Medication Pass Guidelines just to name a few. His staff training program is based on three primary components: staff training before surveys, directed in-services after surveys and general topics for continuing education. He is readily available to answer customer questions and will work with you to create a customized training program that meets your needs.
In the last 25 years he has provided more than 3,500 educational sessions and in-services on key long term care issues to more than 100,000 long term care employees. He has spoken at past IHCA Convention and Trade Shows and has provided other educational sessions for IHCA as well. These sessions have always been well-received!

For more information, please visit www.litwillerconsulting.com.

Interested in Seeing Your Company or Facility Featured in Our IHCA Member Spotlight?

IHCA is proud of our diverse membership and all of your successes and accomplishments. 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? If you would like to see your company or facility recognized in Members Only--Associate Members, Facilities, Corporations alike--contact acaldwell@ihca.com.

We look forward to hearing from you!