



■ Success selling CBD products comes down to how well you educate your customers, says Mike Baghoomian. **See page 8.**



■ **Product Spotlight:** Check out the latest in billing systems like the MedEq ERP Manager from Bonafide Medical Group. **See page 14.**



■ Do you plan to attend an in-person industry event this year? **See results on page 19.**

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HME News

THE BUSINESS NEWSPAPER FOR HOME MEDICAL EQUIPMENT PROVIDERS

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COMMENTARY



■ Wound care is important for all HME providers because every patient has skin and skin health affects each of us, says Heather Trumm, of VGM Wound Care. **PAGE 6**

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DIGITAL HEALTH BOOM

Glooko raises stakes on remote patient monitoring

BY THERESA FLAHERTY, Managing Editor

PALO ALTO, Calif. - Glooko saw its remote monitoring business take off in 2020 and plans to use recent funding to increase adoption of its platform by diabetes patients and their health care providers.

The company, which provides



Johannesson

a software-as-a-service application and accompanying mobile app, will ramp up its marketing, among other efforts, after raising \$30 million in Series D funding.

"Remote monitoring is a solution we've had for years, but the pandemic forced the need to have people with chronic conditions supported with remote monitoring," said CEO Russ Johannesson. "We leaned into it."

Glooko, which also provides chronic care management

GLOOKO FUNDING SEE PAGE 18

'People are waiting for services to be delivered to them at home'

BY LIZ BEAULIEU, Editor

TAMAR MEDICAL'S Joao Mendes-Roter believes there's a "digital revolution" happening in the home right now that will increase the percentage of sleep tests being conducted there in the long term.

The percentage of sleep tests

conducted in homes vs. in labs has flip flopped from 30%/70% before the pandemic to 70%/30% during the pandemic, says Mendes-Roter, vice president of digital health marketing for Itamar, which makes the WatchPAT ONE home sleep test.

"We believe it will stabilize at 50%/50%," she said. "People are



Mendes-Roter

waiting for services to be digitally delivered to them at home."

Hear what Mendes-Roter had to say about a recent consumer survey

ITAMAR MEDICAL SEE PAGE 17



Up close

Rep. Randy Feenstra, R-Iowa, met with MAMES members in the Ames, Iowa, area on April 1 during a congressional visit hosted by Choice Medical and led by VGM Government Relations.

NRRTS pins 'future' on new cert

BY LIZ BEAULIEU, Editor

LUBBOCK, Texas - NRRTS seeks "visionaries" to help the organization complete a new 14-course supplier-specific certification

program.

The organization completed the first course of the CRT Supplier Certification Program late last year, is nearly complete with the second course and has start-

ed on the third course, says Weesie Walker, executive director.

"We need the help of the CRT industry," she said. "Obviously, developing a program like this is

SUPPLIER CERTIFICATION SEE PAGE 17

Apria sees Q4 bump, primes for '21 growth

In addition to earnings, company discusses its strategy for easing back into acquisitions

BY THERESA FLAHERTY, Managing Editor

INDIANAPOLIS - Apria Healthcare reported that revenue for home respiratory therapy was up 8% in the fourth quarter of 2020, largely driven by an increase in demand for COVID-19 patients, company execs said on a recent earnings call.

New oxygen setups increased 77% during the fourth quarter of 2020, compared to the same quarter in 2019.

"The fourth quarter of 2020 was a record quarter for Apria," said CFO

Debra Morris. "While there was some slowdown in new patient setups for non-invasive vents, sleep and negative pressure wound therapy late in the quarter, following the post-holiday COVID surge, the quarter was nevertheless solid in all three of our core service lines and buoyed by strong cash collections."

Apria's sleep business was up 4% in the fourth quarter, thanks in large part to resupplies and despite reduced demand for new patient setups due to the pandemic. Its

APRIA'S EARNINGS SEE PAGE 18



Dan Starck

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■ York Schwab says Medtrade is eager to get back to in-person show business. See story page 4.

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VGM announces Heartland lineup.....4

BRIEFS

CMS delays rule outlining new technology pathway

WASHINGTON - CMS has delayed the January effective date of a final rule that established a Medicare coverage pathway to provide beneficiaries access to new, innovative medical devices designated as breakthrough technology by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The agency says it is delaying the final rule's effective date for 60 days to ensure that the rulemaking process was procedurally adequate; that it properly considered all relevant facts; that it considered statutory or other legal obligations; and that it had adequately considered public comments objecting to certain elements of the rule.

OIG: States don't report accurate payment data

WASHINGTON - Most states did not provide complete or accurate payment data on managed care payments to the CMS Transformed Medicaid Statistical Information System (T-MSIS), which provides oversight of the Medicaid program, according to a recent report from the Office of Inspector General. Specifically, about half of states did not provide complete or accurate information about the amounts that managed care plans pay to providers for services. Nearly three-quarters of states provided incomplete or inaccurate information about the maximum amounts that managed care plans allow for services. More than one-quarter of states provided incomplete or inaccurate information about the amounts that providers bill managed care plans for services.

MAMES testifies, governor rescinds cuts

MINNEAPOLIS - Minnesota's Department of Human Services should not be able to recoup payments from DME providers for items provided prior to July 1, 2019, as part of the agency's attempts to become compliant with the 21st Century Cures Act, says MAMES Executive Director Rose Schaffhauser. She testified before the state's Senate Health and Human Services Finance and Policy Committee via Zoom on March 22 on SF 1128, a bill that would require the state to pay back \$735,000 using its own funds, not funds from providers. DHS has temporarily suspended its recoupment process...Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz removed pressure support ventilators from cuts included in his 2022-23 budget, but other cuts, including for enteral nutrition and CRT accessories, remain.

CGS launches review of lower limb prostheses

NASHVILLE, Tenn. - CGS will be conducting complex, post-pay, service-specific medical reviews of lower limb prostheses, L5700 and L5701. "This review will be conducted because data analysis revealed that Jurisdiction C's allowed dollars for L5700 and L5701 were significantly above expected amounts," CGS stated. The contractor reminds suppliers of the importance of responding to additional documentation request (ADR) letters.

DROP SHIPPING, WFH AND MORE COVID precautions push permanent business changes

BY THERESA FLAHERTY, Managing Editor

MORE THAN a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, HME providers, like many businesses, have adapted to new ways of doing business and many of those changes will become permanent, say respondents to a recent HME Newspann.

Nearly three-quarters of respondents say they plan to make certain changes permanent, including offering drop-shipping or curbside pickup of equipment.

"In the past, we would do curbside if a customer asked," said Diane Dean of Jefferson Pharmacy in Lake Monticello, Va. "Now, we advertise it and have signs posted outside with instructions."

Jefferson Pharmacy has also waived its \$5 local delivery fee, a popular move that it may also make permanent, Dean said.

Another big change that respondents reported: work from home for employees. Some respondents reported the change has resulted in cost savings from reduced office space and increased productivity, but others want to get back to the

office.

"Hopefully, with the vaccine, we can get everyone back after the summer," wrote one respondent.

Getting back into the office is important to patients who prefer in-person setups, respondents say.

"We wanted to decrease our face-to-face

BUSINESS CHANGES SEE PAGE 4



Reg council takes in win

Readies strategies around nat'l competitive bidding, audits and telehealth

BY LIZ BEAULIEU, Editor

WASHINGTON - AAHomecare's Regulatory Council always has a list of challenges it's working on, but it was nice during its most recent meeting to have something to celebrate: the removal of the budget neutrality requirement for home oxygen therapy.

The change, long-fought for by the industry, will result in a 10% increase in reimbursement, on average, for competitive bidding areas; a 5.1% increase for non-rural areas; and a 4.9% increase for rural areas.

"Well, it's not too often that we get an

increase and when we do it's cause to celebrate," said Missy Cross, chair of the council.

Here's what Cross of ProMedica in Sandusky, Ohio, had to say about the council's stances on competitive bidding, audits and telehealth.

HME NEWS: First, what's it like for the industry to have a win like the removal of the budget neutrality requirement under its belt?

Missy Cross: A lot of the credit goes to AAHomecare, which has had their noses to the ground on this issue. When others gave up, they stayed the course. It's a nice increase for the CBAs - when was the last time anyone got a double-digit increase in reimbursement? We've taken double-digit decreases, not increases. It's needed. If you

COUNCIL WIN SEE PAGE 4

Congress extends pause on sequestration through 2021

WASHINGTON - The House of Representatives in mid-April passed an amended version of H.R. 1868, extending the pause on the 2% Medicare sequester cuts through the end of 2021.

As a result, about \$158 million more in Medicare payments will be made to HME providers over the rest of the year, on top of the \$193 million provided by pausing the cuts from May 2020 through March 2021, according to AAHomecare.

"Keeping the 2% sequester cuts on hold for the remainder of the year will help offset the new costs and operational challenges associated with serving patients brought on by the pandemic," said Tom Ryan, AAHomecare president and CEO. "This bill is the latest example of the terrific bi-partisan congressional support for health care providers over the past year, and these measures have been especially

SEQUESTRATION SEE PAGE 4

Gillispie on sharing pain of being an HME provider

BY LIZ BEAULIEU, Editor

BARBOURSVILLE, W.Va. - What has it been like to be a respiratory provider in a largely rural state during the past year of the COVID-19 pandemic? "It's been very scary," says Regina Gillispie, president and owner of Best Home Medical in Barboursville, W.Va.

Hear how Gillispie, a recent guest on the HME News in 10 podcast, is trying to share the pain with her members of Congress on social media, to the point where she jokes, "I'm their favorite stalker."



R. Gillispie

MASTER JUGGLER

Over the winter, in addition to managing a company trying to deal with an increase in demand for oxygen therapy for COVID-19 patients, Gillispie had Mother Nature to reckon with.

"I can definitely say it's an adventure, just trying to juggle everything," she said. "In one week, we had a snowstorm, an ice storm and flooding. That resulted in power outages - some that lasted about two weeks in duration. So, my drivers have been out delivering tanks quite a bit, and in a rural area, it's very difficult because of the miles we travel and the terrain we travel. That week, we had two vehicles towed that ended up in ditches. But thankfully the drivers were safe and got the patients taken care of."

DRIVER ANXIETY

Gillispie requires masks in her offices and outfitted them with air sanitizers, but she's constantly worried about her drivers.

"The drivers are wearing full PPE in the homes, (including) N95 masks," she said. "It definitely increases costs, but to me, it didn't matter. I was more concerned about the safety of my employees and patients, because I didn't want us carrying the virus from one patient to the next. We've only had one driver who contracted the virus and he had a very mild case, so we're thankful."

SOCIAL MEDIA SAVVY

Gillispie has let her senators know about those increased costs in posts on Twitter, complete with photos of her delivery vans in ditches.

"The cost of the tow truck and the overtime - none of this is factored into the fee schedule," she said. "They need

REGINA GILLISPIE SEE PAGE 18

GETTING THE SHOWS ON THE ROAD

VGM Heartland lineup announced

WATERLOO, Iowa - VGM has announced the schedule for its annual Heartland Conference, which will take place in person this year on Sept. 13-15.

The two-day event, which will also feature a virtual component, will span about 70 education sessions on topics ranging from respiratory to accessibility to rehab to leadership to operations to sales and marketing to billing and reimbursement and more.

"The Heartland Conference will be celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, and we have scheduled some great new additions to make it one to remember," said Kayla Mahler, brand manager at VGM & Associates, who oversees Heartland's educational offerings as Heartland education chair. "We want this milestone to be a valuable experience for each attendee."

Attendees can attend panel discussions, register for home modification installer training and wheelchair repair tech training sessions, engage with vendors, and attend community dinners and other networking events.

"Heartland attendees are extremely engaged in their industries, and they're

looking for a back-and-forth dialogue that discusses various perspectives," stated Mahler. "With our lineup of engaging sessions, 2021 is sure to exceed expectations."

To learn more, please visit www.vgm-heartland.com.

SHOW ORGANIZERS GEAR UP FOR MEDTRADE WEST

PHOENIX - Registration is officially open for Medtrade West, scheduled for July 12-14 at the Phoenix Convention Center.

"It's been a long road to get to this moment when we can confidently offer registration for an in-person show," said York Schwab, associate show director, Medtrade West and Medtrade East, who told HME News masks will be required at the event. "We are eager to get back to business."

Medtrade West will have a few changes this year, including separate hours for the Expo and conference. The Expo hours are listed as 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, July 13, and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Wednesday, July 14. Educational sessions are listed for Monday afternoon and all day Tuesday, concluding with the AAHomecare update from 8 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday. **HME**

COUNCIL WIN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

look at any oxygen provider out there today, they're scrambling with supply chain and access issues.

HME: What's the council's stance on the current state of the bid program, which is essentially on pause until Round 2024, with the exception of knee and back braces?

Cross: We're still trying to look at the disparity in the bids that were submitted. Are the changes to the program the right changes? Have we hit the magic number for the single payment amounts? We're all waiting on the final rule and we're all trying to speculate on what they're going to do and determining whether we support it, or whether we'll need to challenge it.

HME: Two other items on the agenda at the meeting: audits and telehealth. What's the council's stance on audits, which in many cases are back up and running, but not the Targeted Probe and Educate (TPE) program?

Cross: Do we like the TPEs? There are a myriad of differing opinions. We like them because it's more collaborative and not as punitive, but with TPEs, there's a much larger volume. If you're looking at a post-pay audit, you're looking at two or three or a few. TPEs are a minimum of 40. When you look at all we're contending with right now, onesie twosies are easier to deal with. **HME**

BUSINESS CHANGE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

contact, as did patients, when the pandemic hit a year ago," wrote one respondent. "However, now that things are opening up, we have found an increasing number of people that want to return to in-office for face-to-face setups, as they feel that is better for them."

Whatever changes respondents have made and will keep as a result of the pandemic, they will also continue to adjust, based on the needs of their referral sources.

"We get inquiries from third-party callers who screen us to see what protective protocols we are willing to follow to protect their client before coming to their home or facility," said Brian Keith of Access of Mobility, Repair & Rental in Greensboro, N.C. "Based on fear of the unknown and in the interest of protecting gray headed consumers, I can't see a time when we won't wear masks/gloves going forward." **HME**

SEQUESTRATION

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

welcome by the HME community."

CMS on March 31 instructed the Medicare Administrative Contractors to hold all claims with dates of service on or after April 1, 2021, for a short period, in anticipation of possible congressional action to extend the moratorium. **HME**



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What's your personality type?

IT SEEMS all any of us in the HME industry can talk about these days is in-person events (We are, after all, at the time of this writing, still waiting for the DMEPOS final rule; otherwise, that might be the dominant talking point). Will in-person events happen? Will people go to them?

Certainly by July, the time of the industry's first planned in-person event – Medtrade West, July 12-14 at the Phoenix Convention Center – all those who want to be vaccinated will be vaccinated, and York Schwab, associate show director, told HME News that masks will be required.

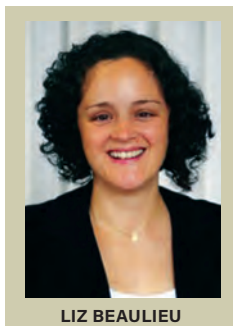
(Was I the only one who, upon hearing that registration was open for Medtrade West, Googled to see if there was still a mask mandate in Arizona? There isn't; the governor lifted it in March.)

So, vaccines, masks – those should put people who aren't at ease, more at ease.

And I know the good folks at Emerald Expositions and the Phoenix Convention Center are going to do whatever is in their capacity to make the venue safe. For one, they say online that they've allotted 30 minutes in between sessions to sanitize rooms.

But I think the biggest factor in determining whether or not a person jumps back into in-person events might be their personality.

Are you an extrovert who has struggled with more than a year of working from home? If so, and your company allows it, you're probably already back in the office and



LIZ BEAULIEU

back on the road conducting in-person meetings.

Are you an introvert who has enjoyed communicating primarily through Teams calls and Slack messages? If so, and your company allows it, you're probably still waiting and seeing.

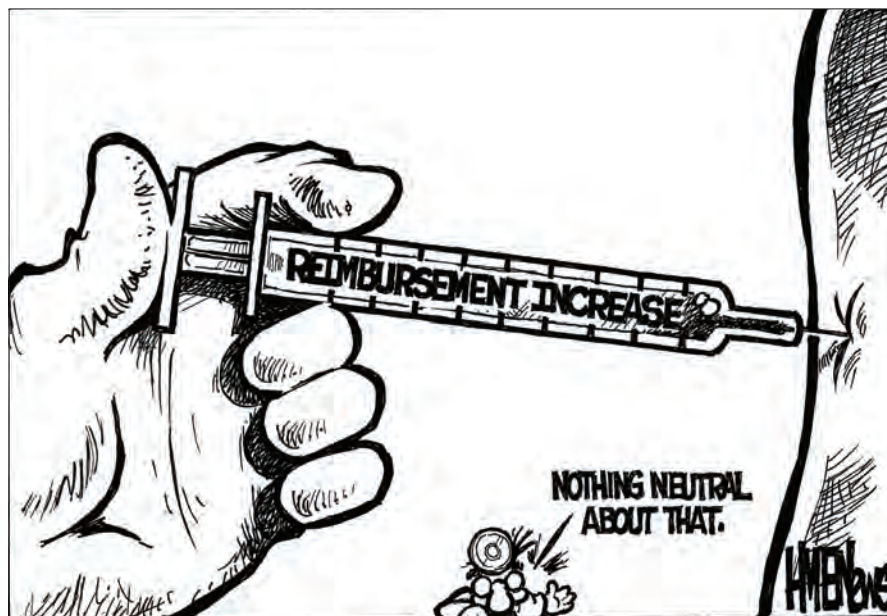
From my conversations in the past few weeks, there are people in both camps.

But based on the results of this month's HME Newspoll (see page 19), which is a far more scientific approach to answering the question of whether or not

people plan to attend one or more in-person events this year, the majority of you are ready to get out of dodge. (Is that a saying everywhere, or just here in Maine?)

We made the decision to hold the HME News Business Summit virtually again this year (more on that soon!) out of an abundance of caution.

Caution, by the way, is a good way to describe my personality. That's why I'm sending Managing Editor Theresa Flaherty to Medtrade West! Be sure to say hello to her there, but don't try to give her a hug – that's not her personality, even before the pandemic. **HME**



Growing your business with wound care

BY HEATHER TRUMM

Editor's note: The following guest commentary appears in the new VGM Q2 Playbook, "Growing Your Business in Today's Environment." VGM members can download the playbook in full at https://www.vgm.com/playbook/?utm_source=hmenews&utm_medium=mayguestcommentary&utm_campaign=playbook2021q2. If you are interested in becoming a member, go to <https://www.vgm.com/become-a-member/>.

YOU KNOW me, you've heard me say it before—wound care is important for all DMEPOS providers because every patient has skin, and skin health affects each of us. The skin is our largest organ. Not only does it protect us against the everchanging environment, it also maintains our integrity. Without proper treatment to lacerations, surgical incisions, burns and injuries, the "wound" could lead to life threatening consequences. All providers see patients who are prone to skin issues because of co-morbidities, surgeries or advanced age.

If you can't tell, I'm trying to make the case that everyone should be in wound care. If you haven't considered expanding or elevating your business with wound care, you should. It's human nature to shy away from wounds, and you may not know what to ask or how to

get started (VGM Wound Care can help with that). But your patients have health issues which put them at an increased risk for skin breakdown. Respiratory issues, cardiovascular problems, diabetes, and para- and quadriplegics are just a few of the conditions that increase the risk for skin breakdown and wounds. The hard part is done—you are already taking care of the patient...why not take care of the entire patient?

GETTING STARTED

Start small with wound care by choosing one category and building on it. Wound care is typically broken down into five categories when we are looking at the DMEPOS provider and what they provide:

- ✓Negative pressure wound therapy (NPWT)
- ✓Support surfaces
- ✓Nutritional products
- ✓Compression therapy
- ✓Wound care dressings.

Unsure of which category would be best for your business? Start by asking questions. Talk to your patients and ask: Who is currently providing you with wound care dressings, lotion, compression, diabetic supplies, etc.?

Next, probe your current referral sources. Places to start include:

- ✓Home health agencies
- ✓Discharge planners

The hard part is done—you are already taking care of the patient...why not take care of the entire patient?

- ✓Case managers
- ✓Wound care clinics
- ✓Vascular surgeons
- ✓Rehab centers
- ✓Long-term care facilities
- ✓Ambulatory/outpatient surgery centers
- ✓Orthopedic surgeons

Good questions to ask those referral sources are: Who are you currently using for dressings, NPWT, nutritional supplementation, etc.? What do you like about the product and services they provide?

WOUND CARE SEE NEXT PAGE

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REPAIRS



Think differently about post-rental repairs

BY DAN MEYER

Q. How can I best help patients who need repairs after the capped-rental period has ended?

A. This is a frequent frustration for patients. Maybe they bought their device online and don't know where to turn. Or perhaps their dealer has gone out of business, or they can't get help from their original provider. It's equally frustrating for HME dealers who want to help patients who need repairs but must expend unreimbursed time to do so.

THINK 'PATIENT CHOICE'

Patients bring a consumer mindset to their health care, and they expect choices. When virtually anything can arrive in two days from Amazon, the prospect of a 60-day turnaround for their CPAP repair seems unfathomable. Let them know that the option to bypass insurance through retail repair exists. Then let them make the choice.

YES, THEY WILL PAY FOR IT

One of the most common responses we hear when we talk to dealers about retail repair is, "My patients won't pay for that." To that we say, "Yes, they often will." The cost of an out-of-pocket retail repair is often comparable to their deductible, and patients will pay for quicker turnaround and a more consumer-friendly experience.

MINIMIZE TOUCHPOINTS

The more time you spend on patient-owned equipment after the capped-rental period, the less time you have for patient care. All those touchpoints add up: getting equipment from the patient, issuing the short-term rental, sending the equipment to the manufacturer for an estimate, submitting the estimate to the payer, waiting on authorization, transmitting approval back to the manufacturer, receiving the repaired device and – finally! – getting the device back to the patient and recouping the loaner. In today's reimbursement environment, it's time to think differently about post-rental repairs. [HME](#)

Dan Meyer is chief revenue officer at Repair Authority. Reach him at dmeyer@repairauthority.com or 440.334.2172.

RETAIL



Make marketing your mission

BY SUE CHEN

Q. Now that members of my local community are getting vaccinated COVID-19, what are ways we can best market our products and services to encourage people to shop and spend in our stores?

A. Marketing is the vehicle and primary communication tool to drive your retail sales. Therefore, without a marketing plan, you won't have a strong sales strategy. In an era when consumers are bombarded with marketing and advertising just about everywhere they look and hear, the appeal, purpose and authenticity of the marketing message is ever more important.

The good news is that our industry's mission to improve people's lives with mobility, safety, dignity, comfort and independence is such a powerful, purposeful and authentic marketing message. We just have to get that message out to our community.

One of the easiest and most effective ways to market your mission is with national holidays and events that are already imbedded in the consumer retail marketing landscape.

Here are some examples of how we can market our mission with the upcoming calendar of holidays and events:

- Mother's Day: Mama Wants a New Set of Wheels
- Father's Day: Daddy Wants a New Set of Wheels
- Independence Day: Let's Celebrate Your Independence
- Summer travel: It's Time to Be Together! Our Travel & Mobility Event
- Thanksgiving and holidays: Give the Gift of Mobility, Independence and Togetherness

As our country begins opening after a long, hard year of lockdowns, people are ready to be active, be with loved ones and thrive. That also happens to be what HME retailers do: help people be active, be with loved ones and thrive. You just need to market your mission! [HME](#)

Sue Chen is CEO, NOVA Medical Products. Reach her at suec@novajoy.com.

TECHNOLOGY



Take 360-degree view

BY MARK LUDWIG

Q. How can providers take advantage of changing patient pathways through new technology and partnerships?

A. I thought I would start with an anecdote related to the Oculus Quest. I visited a friend recently who raved about how her family played ping pong together across the country in virtual reality. I was intrigued enough to don the silly visor and amazed at how immersed I was in my own world even when surrounded by a room full of people that in an instant disappeared from my conscience. The game is great fun, but more importantly, it represents an extraordinary paradigm shift in how we think about family communication and entertainment.

I think there is a parallel in business and, although not completely new, much is being researched and written lately about 360-degree leadership and technology solutions. The ability to see, manage, work and think from every angle is an extremely powerful way to maximize the effectiveness of any working system. In your DME business, look for technology solutions that provide increased choice and access to information for patients, institutional providers and physicians in your communities.

DME providers are in the best position to help patients and physicians build and adopt consequential solutions to improved health care, but they have to reach out to technology providers that can integrate a 360-degree network of technologies that include EHR/EMR platforms, RPM platforms, benefit data, billing systems, equipment delivery, ERP platforms, patient outreach/engagement platforms and patient use information.

It's a win-win when you utilize new technology that improves patient outcomes, reduces reliance on outdated more costly approaches and maximizes your businesses financial success. Checkers is fun, but the Oculus Quest is a game changer. [HME](#)

Mark Ludwig is president and CEO of Bonafide Medical Group. Reach him at mludwig@bonafide.com.

OUTSOURCING



Barge right in

BY TODD USHER

Q. What cost savings does a remote work force offer?

A. As we decide how to best handle employees in a post-pandemic world, working from home poses more questions about how to best utilize current staffing. Consider the cost of working from home. Did you supply the PC/scanner/printer? Invest in remote time monitoring or IT infrastructure? Productivity software? What about trust?

When I look at job openings online and find every DME around me is hiring for positions that can be filled by remote personnel, I see a cost savings opportunity. In what appears to be a sign of the times, some of these companies are experiencing continual turnover in the same position (department) throughout the last 12 months. Turnover among medical assistants (customer service, intake) is very high. The Center for American Progress found that it costs businesses approximately 20% of a worker's annual salary to replace them. With benefits, this would represent a number close to \$10,000 to replace a minimum wage employee. Yikes!

I would much prefer to partner with a company that provides remote personnel, trains them on the job and delivers them on the day they are ready to start working. This would eliminate the drain on resources internally and provide an easier and more cost-effective way of managing personnel. I would no longer have the burden of constant turnover, re-training and customer dissatisfaction related to personnel shortages.

So, while you are thinking about how to best utilize remote personnel and cut costs, think about the cost savings a truly remote workforce can offer.

It's time to start saving money tomorrow, not next year. What are you waiting for? Do not wait for an invitation. Barge in like you own the place (because you do, right?) and make the right decision. [HME](#)

Todd Usher is founder of Tactical Back Office, Inc. Reach him at todd@thetbo.com or 800.5589.7501.

WOUND CARE

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

What don't you like?

Talking with your patients and their referral sources, along with market analysis and research, will provide you with the necessary information you need to make a sound decision about expanding into wound care. Look to see where the gaps are and ask yourself if you're willing and able to fill them. If you answer yes to these questions, wound care would be a great avenue to pursue. For the best chance at success, assign a team member to lead this department or category. Generally, this person would have a sales and mar-

keting background in the key area you are looking to expand.

PAYER MIX AND PROFITABILITY

After identifying the growth opportunity, determine your payer mix next. Who are you going to bill? Medicare? Private insurance? Contract with a long-term care facility? Perhaps it's a combination of them. This is a big decision to make. Make sure to check out the VGM Wound Care Guide for a full breakdown when considering your payer mix. After you decide, you'll only have a little paperwork to do.

Wound care can be profitable in every category. To give you an example: With NPWT, the pump is the main revenue source (it's a rental prod-

uct). One pump generally costs around \$2,000. The Medicare fee schedule—depending on state, rural, non-rural, and the point of service—can vary from \$800 to \$1,400 per month per patient. The average length of stay for one patient on negative pressure is 45 days (two-month billing cycle). You could have one pump paid for after one patient. The disposables that are billed with the pump (A6550 – kits and A7000 – canisters) are generally reimbursed at what they cost, though.

DON'T PANIC. REACH OUT FOR HELP

Let's pause. That is a lot of information. And yes, it will take some work on your part. Don't panic—VGM Wound Care can help every step of the way. The members-only portal on vgm.com is full of resources to help you, including forms, policies, procedures, profitability

calculators, and full guides on how to be successful in wound care.

Being part of VGM Wound Care also provides you with a group of colleagues and mentors to help you throughout the process. This includes vendor partners who will help keep you competitive in the market you choose to enter. VGM Wound Care has the tools, solutions, and resources for you to thrive in the wound care market.

Start by talking with your patients, you'll soon find out that you could be in the wound care market, providing supplies and equipment to your patients and taking care of all their healthcare needs at home. [HME](#)

Heather Trumm, BSN, RN, CWOCN, is the director of VGM Wound Care. Reach her at Heather.Trumm@vgm.com.



HEATHER TRUMM

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■ The recent removal of the budget neutrality requirement for oxygen shows that the industry's efforts are paying off, says Josh Marx. See story this page.



New oxygen rates fuel 'engine' of industry

BY THERESA FLAHERTY, Managing Editor

AN INCREASE in oxygen reimbursement is a shot in the arm for the HME industry, say providers.

CMS in March released an updated fee schedule for oxygen that will result in an increase in fee schedule amounts ranging from \$6.72 to \$8.19 in former competitive bidding areas; \$5.17 to \$5.43 in other non-rural areas; and \$4.14 to \$6.82 in non-contiguous and rural areas, according to the VGM Group.

"This is a big thing for our industry, and it needs to be celebrated," said Josh Britten, owner of BritKare in Amarillo, Texas. "With this first step, we can hopefully regain our industry."

The updated fee schedule was in response to a COVID-19 package, passed in December, that removed the budget neutrality requirement for oxygen therapy in rural areas.

Britten sees the reimbursement increase as potentially fueling new growth in the HME industry, something he says is sorely needed after the past several years of business closings due to competitive bidding, audits and heavy consolidation.

"We need to have more young people get into the business and if you are looking at starting up a DME, oxygen has been the engine that supports the one-stop shop," he said. "Every industry needs that engine."

The removal of the budget neutrality requirement, which the industry had long fought for, is a hopeful sign that the HME industry is finally getting its due, says provider Josh Marx.

"It's encouraging and it shows that the work AAHomecare is doing, along with some of the other groups, is paying off," said Marx, vice president of business development and managing director for sleep at Cleveland-based Medical Service Company. "We certainly have earned some street credit over the last 12-plus months."

In the day-to-day, the reimbursement increase provides breathing room, says provider Robyn Parrott, whose territory includes both rural and non-rural areas.

"Every little bit helps - it's better than cutting more (services)," said Parrott, president of Detroit, Mich.-based Sleep Solutions. "In oxygen, the profit margin is so small we really have to stay tuned into it." **HME**

Join the club

BY THERESA FLAHERTY, Managing Editor

JOHNSTON, R.I. - Psst, have you heard of Clubhouse, the new invite-only, live audio social media app that has attracted A-listers like Bill Gates and Barack Obama? Dana Lesperance



D. Lesperance

has and he wants his fellow HME providers to hop onboard the app, which allows users to search for different forums or "rooms" that host live discussions on a wide range of topics.

"There's this mystique or aura around it because of the invite-only nature of it," says Lesperance, director of marketing and sales for the Johnston, R.I.-based Absolute Respiratory Care. "I think people are looking for outlets beyond Facebook and Twitter, which are under a lot of scrutiny these days. There's more real substance and, I think, more credible sources (on Clubhouse)."

HME News spoke with Lesperance recently about Clubhouse and why it's important for HME providers to join the "cool kids" and make HME a trending topic.

HME NEWS: You've just joined Clubhouse. What do you think so far?

JOIN THE CLUB SEE PAGE 18

Tomorrow Health bulks up contracts with Geisinger

'A priority of ours is to streamline and work with suppliers across the market'

BY T. FLAHERTY, Managing Editor

NEW YORK - Tomorrow Health's new partnership with Geisinger Health Plan makes it the "missing link" for the plan's members by enhancing their experience obtaining home medical equipment and supplies, says co-founder and CEO Vijay Kedar.



TOMORROW HEALTH says it will streamline ordering, product selection and delivery processes.

inger's more than 500,000 members, using its platform to streamline the ordering, product selection and delivery process, and match patients to in-network HME providers.

"Geisinger and Geisinger Health Plan have long been innovators in the health care delivery system, particularly

TOMORROW HEALTH SEE NEXT PAGE

Tomorrow Health will coordinate all medical equipment and supplies for Geis-

RETAIL OPPORTUNITY

CBD: Education, word-of-mouth key

BY THERESA FLAHERTY, Managing Editor

TACOMA, Wash. - When it comes to selling CBD products, provider Destinae Graham believes in putting your money where your mouth is.

"I'm a firm believer in, how can you sell unless you've personally tried it?" said Graham, division manager for Tacoma, Wash.-based American Medical Company & Supply. "I personally was struggling with plantar



M. Baghoomian

fasciitis. I had been wearing braces, getting x-rays. (Muscle Mx) gave me some samples, and by day four of using it, I didn't struggle. I used it for two weeks and it's completely gone."

April 2021 marks two years since American Medical Company, which went

completely retail just ahead of the COVID-19 pandemic, began offering Muscle Mx CBD products, which include balms, tinctures, lotion and gummies.

Graham says the business has grown through word of mouth - and employees are well-trained to spot customers that might benefit from CBD products. It helps being a provider that offers health care

CBD SUCCESS SEE NEXT PAGE

BRIEFS

Great Elm Group simplifies structure

WALTHAM, Mass. - Great Elm Group, which has operating companies in DME, has reached an agreement with MAST Capital Management that results in a simplified capital structure and cleaner corporate governance. GEG will issue \$2.24 million of 5% Convertible Senior PIK Notes due 2030 to MAST in exchange for all outstanding obligations under the \$3.1 million Senior Secured Note issued by GECC GP to MAST, all common stock in GP held by MAST and its affiliates, and termination of MAST's board appointment rights. MAST was the beneficial owner of about 7.6% of GEG's outstanding common stock as of Dec. 31, 2020. Following this transaction, MAST's common stock holdings in GEG and its \$2.25 million of convertible notes are its only investments in GEG or its subsidiaries. Separately, GEG has announced that it has repurchased the GP stock held by certain employees of Great Elm for nominal consideration. As a result of both transactions, GEG will own in excess of 90% of the outstanding common stock of GP. "We are pleased to complete these transactions with MAST," said Peter Reed, CEO. "GEG benefits from the purchase of the GP Corp Senior Secured Note at a discount, and the increase in our ownership of GP results in a greater share of any future profit from GP accruing to the benefit of GEG and, ultimately, our shareholders."

Avera HME to open store in health care campus

SPIRIT LAKE, Iowa - Avera Home Medical Equipment is opening a store at Lakes Regional Healthcare, according to a local radio station, KUOO. Construction on the 2,500-square-foot location, which will be located in a space formerly occupied by Lakes Family Practice, was expected to begin in April and to be completed in the fall, the station says. "Health care has changed and, obviously, due to COVID, we see more and more health care needs being met at home," Jason Harrington, president and CEO of Lakes Regional Healthcare, told the station. "So, I think having a home medical equipment store on our campus will provide much better access for patients." Avera HME also has a location in Estherville, Iowa, as well as four locations in South Dakota.

In memoriam: David Hartley



INDIANAPOLIS - David Hartley, who led Home Health Depot before selling it in 2017, passed away March 21. In 2018, he founded Indiana Liquor Group, the state's second largest retail liquor group. David attended Indiana University.

BRIEFS

Protech Home Medical adds locations in Florida, New Hampshire

CINCINNATI - Protech Home Medical has accelerated its organic growth initiatives by opening new locations in Daytona Beach, Fla., and Concord, N.H. "With the addition of new locations in Florida and New Hampshire, we continue our aggressive path of scaling our business," said Greg Crawford, chairman and CEO of Protech. "Our patient-centric model leveraging our interconnected health care platform is providing us much opportunity to gain market share and this is just the beginning for us." The location in Daytona Beach will have a heavy respiratory focus, the company says, and will help it to better reach surrounding areas and cut down on logistical costs. In February, Protech bought Mayhugh's Medical Equipment in Jacksonville, Fla., to build a foundation in the state. The location in Concord will also have a heavy respiratory focus, the company says, and will allow it to further penetrate New Hampshire and surrounding areas.

CBD SUCCESS

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

products, rather than a big-box store or even a dispensary.

"Any time someone mentions aches and pains, we bring it up," she said. "We already have people coming in with ailments - not like at Target where you go to get bedding. People are coming in here because something is going not so good. I tell staff to pay attention."

Muscle Mx, which has been selling in the DME market since about 2018, also provides a lot of support, says co-founder and CEO Mike Baghoomian.

"We sit down and discuss the benefits of Muscle Mx so they have a better understanding of it," he said. "We give samples to try out. It all comes down to how the store educates their customers. If they are confident, they are more comfortable recommending it to their customers."

In addition to shopping at an HME store they trust, many seniors are looking for natural relief, says Baghoomian.

"Topical pain relief management is a huge growing segment," he said. "As the population is getting older, there is arthritis, deterioration - they are experiencing pain. They can turn to prescription-based (treatments) or over-the-counter topicals. CBD provides a route to go as a healthy natural alternative." **HME**

TOMORROW HEALTH

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

around home-based health care," said Kedar. "They've made meaningful initiatives with an expansion of telemedicine to enable their members to receive more holistic and more effective home-



Vijay Kedar

based care. The missing link was the coordination of the equipment and supplies that members receive in line with overarching home-based care."

Orders are placed through Tomorrow Health's platform, either by referral sources or the patients themselves and routed to the most appropriate HME provider within the Geisinger network, based on a set of objective criteria that includes quality, geography and service capabilities.

Suppliers bill Geisinger in line with their existing contracts.

"Our focus is around improving quality," said Kedar. "In our partnership, the metrics by which the partnership is deemed successful are around patient satisfaction, reliability, timeliness and the quality by which patients are served."

While the partnership is similar to others Tomorrow Health has with regional

and national health plans across the country, providers in Pennsylvania, where the Geisinger health system includes nine hospitals, have sought more transparency on the referral process. Tomorrow Health has aimed to be proactive in its communications around the partnership, says Kedar, including direct meetings and webinars.

"Since the initial rollout, there have been questions from providers," he said. "We've taken a number of steps to really directly engage with providers and organizations to answer questions. We do think there is a huge opportunity to provide more information to providers in the network to continue to strengthen the relationship."

Tomorrow Health, which launched in 2020, now partners with more than 125 leading health plans and hospital systems in 29 states. While the COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging, it's also highlighted the need for home-based care and the need to ensure no one falls through the cracks, says Kedar.

"It's certainly been a sensitive time where a wider number of patients across geographies have proven vulnerable to the impact of the pandemic," he said. "A high priority of ours is to work across the board to streamline and work with medical equipment suppliers across the market." **HME**

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Q&A with Vincenzo Piscopo

'Hopefully United Spinal won't exist in 75 years'

BY TRACY ORZEL, Contributing Writer

SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS ago, a small support group of paralyzed World War II veterans banded together to advocate for themselves and others in New York City. Today that small support group has 57,000 members and goes by the name of the United Spinal Association. HME News spoke with Vincenzo Piscopo, president and CEO, about how the organization is celebrating its year-long anniversary campaign.

HME News: Who are some of the advocates United Spinal plans to highlight?

Vincenzo Piscopo: Pioneers like Denise McQuade, who is retiring from our board of directors and has spent many years advocating for a New York City accessible building code and greater access to mass transit across the country. We also have Paralympians, NASA scientists and many talented professionals who truly reflect our theme for our 75th Anniversary of "Building an Inclusive World."

HME: There are many accomplishments but is there one that stands out?

Piscopo: It has to be the work of our former president James J. Peters. In 1970, Peters persuaded Life Magazine to publish a cover story revealing the appalling conditions that spinal cord injured Vietnam vets were enduring at the Bronx VA Medical Center. The article triggered a public outcry and the Bronx VA Medical Center was completely demolished and rebuilt.

HME: What will the organization look like after 75 more years?

Piscopo: Hopefully, paralysis will no longer exist and, therefore, the United Spinal Association would not need to exist. If that is too idealistic, hopefully our needs and rights will not be a second thought and we will not need to advocate for them as much. I hope it will be an organization focused on capitalizing opportunities that will elevate our quality of life to the same levels of the able-body community. Technology will be a big driver of what we do and focus on. **HME**

Clock ticks on accessories, while telehealth advances

BY LIZ BEAULIEU, Editor

WASHINGTON - Stakeholders were still waiting to see who will officially lead CMS under President Biden at press time, largely stalling their efforts to permanently eliminate competitive bidding pricing for accessories for complex rehab manual wheelchairs.

An 18-month suspension on bid pricing is set to expire on July 1.

"Between the COVID and the fact that we're now still waiting for the CMS administrator - we're in a difficult position," said Don Clayback, executive director of NCART, during a recent webcast. "We don't have a definitive decision yet and June 30 will be here before we know it."

Congress passed the suspension in 2019 to give CMS time to permanently eliminate bid pricing

for complex rehab manual wheelchairs, like it has for complex rehab power wheelchairs.

Stakeholders have "laid the groundwork" with CMS staff to make the change permanent and have kept in touch with their champions in Congress, who stand at the ready, Clayback says.

"They are going to reach out to the secretary and the administrator as soon as they're in place," he said. "There's an urgency to make this permanent."

Updates on other regulatory priorities:

✓ There is now a bill in the House of Representatives that would permanently expand the use of telehealth beyond the current public health emergency, including for physical therapists and occupational therapists providing wheelchair management

services.

"(The House Energy and Commerce Committee recently held) a robust hearing for four hours and there was positive acknowledgement that it's beneficial," Clayback said. "It really gave telehealth an opportunity to shine. There is a consensus that some of that needs to be made permanent. The question is how much."

✓ Stakeholders had a meeting scheduled with CMS on March 25 to provide further explanation of their request to reconsider the national coverage determination for mobility assistive equipment to include power seat elevation and power standing systems for Group 3 power wheelchairs.

"The next big step is for CMS to publicly announce that they're considering reconsidering the policy and opening that up for public comment for 30 days," Clayback said. **HME**



Don Clayback

DIVERSITY

Numotion focuses on three pillars

BY LIZ BEAULIEU, Editor

BRENTWOOD, Tenn. - Numotion has adopted three strategic pillars to improve diversity and inclusivity at the company, following an initial panel discussion shortly after the death of George Floyd last year that was "eye opening."

Numotion's goals: raise dialogue, increase awareness and facilitate change, says Adam Holton, chief human resources officer.

"It was really eye opening for all our employees to hear firsthand the level of bias, negative stereotyping and in many cases outright racism that our teammates have faced and continue to face on a regular basis," he said of the initial panel discussion.

Since that discussion, Numotion has hosted a second panel discussion and has initiated numerous dialogues across the



Adam Holton

company, some led by CEO Mike Swinford and Holton, and others led by other company leaders.

Numotion also has a D&I Council comprised of Swinford and the entire leadership team that meets monthly to prioritize efforts, support employees and monitor progress.

"Those dialogues are now

NUMOTION SEE NEXT PAGE

National Seating aligns culture

BY LIZ BEAULIEU, Editor

NASHVILLE, Tenn. - National Seating & Mobility is activating several initiatives to enhance diversity, equity and inclusion at the company, including appointing more women and minorities in senior leadership positions, says CEO Bill Mixon.

The company is also conducting sensitivity training and involving employee resource groups in ongoing plans to enhance DE&I, he says.

"The most critical of our four business pillars (people, growth, operational excellence and culture) is culture," he said. "Building a culture of diversity and inclusion will better align us with the client communities we serve and will, ultimately, make us a better business. Diversity and inclusion are not just the right things to do, they are also good for business."

In the last several months of



Bill Mixon

2020, NSM engaged a consultant to help guide the company's strategic plan around diversity, equity and inclusion. The consultant facilitated employee focus groups and online surveys to help develop guiding principles.

Those guiding principles are: ✓ Culture: NSM will be intentional in cultivating a

NSM SEE NEXT PAGE

BRIEFS

Numotion expands in ND

BRENTWOOD, Tenn. - Numotion has opened a new location in Fargo, N.D., its second in the state. The Numotion Fargo Team includes ATPs Jason Steiner and Bobby Peterson; Nancy Frosie, director of business development; and Laura West, customer care coordinator. "Expanding our presence with this new location strengthens our ability to provide mobility solutions to not only Fargo but surrounding communities," said Mike Swinford, CEO. "Fargo is a great community with strong health care systems, and we look forward to continuing to partner with area physicians and therapists to provide the best possible solutions for individuals with mobility and personal independence needs in North Dakota and northwest Minnesota." Numotion's other North Dakota location is in Bismarck.

NSM builds base in Atlanta

NASHVILLE, Tenn. - National Seating & Mobility has acquired Blue Moose Elevators & Stairlifts in Atlanta, broadening its mobility and accessibility options to clients in the metropolitan and surrounding areas. Blue Moose Elevators & Stairlifts, led by Dr. Jeremy Hammonds, was founded in 2005. "Blue Moose Elevators has an outstanding reputation and people-centered culture that aligns well with our own," said Bill Mixon, NSM CEO. "We are pleased to welcome this team of experienced professionals to NSM and look forward to expanding the mobility and accessibility options available to clients in and around Atlanta." Blue Moose Elevators has grown a reputation for installing stairlifts, vertical platform lifts and residential elevators. Four employees will transition to NSM, serving clients from NSM's Atlanta branch. The acquisition also positions NSM to further expand its exclusive partnership with The Home Depot, which is based in Atlanta.

Kleo King returns to United Spinal

NEW YORK - United Spinal Association has named Kleo J. King senior director of accessibility operations and counsel. King previously served as deputy commissioner and general counsel for the New York City Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities from 2014-21. King began her career with United Spinal in 1987, working for 27 years as program counsel and senior vice president of accessibility services.

NSM's Mixon receives Patriot Award

NASHVILLE, Tenn. - Bill Mixon, CEO of National Seating & Mobility, has been named a recipient of the U.S. Department of Defense's Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) Patriot Award. "I am honored," he said. "As a veteran, it is of the utmost importance that NSM is committed to supporting those who serve this country." The Patriot Award honors individual supervisors who have directly supported service members and their families through actions like allowing flexible schedules, providing time off prior to and after deployment, caring for families and granting leaves of absence if needed.

NUMOTION

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

more woven into the fabric of our operating calendar, such that we have one every couple of months tied to various facets of D&I,” Holton said.

Holton says Numotion has made great strides in meeting its first two pillars – raising dialogue and increasing awareness – but its third pillar, facilitating change, is an ongoing process.

“Over the last year, our employees have shown tremendous courage, respect and empathy in entering into discussions around D&I that many would shy away from,” he said. “We have benefitted so much from gaining better awareness and perspective of each other and the unique backgrounds we all come from. We have more work to do in translating that all the way to our third pillar. We are proud of the changes we have facilitated in the last 10 months, but we know there is important work in front of us.”

Holton says Numotion’s business will be better off for its efforts, which also include hiring and promoting more people with disabilities and ensuring racial, ethnic, sexual orientation and other diversity categories are well represented in key roles.

“Almost every study ever done on D&I supports the notion that diverse companies that are reflective of their customer base can better serve their customers and get better returns,” he said. **HME**

NSM

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

culture of inclusion, with a focus on employee development and retention.

✓Commitment: NSM will prioritize diversity, equity and inclusion, and reinforce accountability at the highest levels of the company.

✓Communication: NSM will be transparent in our approach to DE&I by reporting progress and thoughtfully listening and responding to employee feedback.

✓Community: NSM will strengthen the communities we serve through proactive engagement and partnerships.

“Measurable initiatives support each of these areas of focus,” Mixon said.

Another such initiative: Diversity Advisory Groups.

“We recognize that diversity, equity and inclusion is a long game,” Mixon said. “The work of expanding diversity, ensuring equity and facilitating inclusion is not a destination but a dynamic process.” **HME**



NSM gets lift in NY

National Seating & Mobility has acquired The Albany Lift Company in Albany, N.Y., expanding its services throughout upstate New York, western Massachusetts and southern Vermont. Founded in 2007, the Albany Lift Company provides home accessibility solutions, including stairlifts, vertical platform lifts, modular ramps and residential elevators, in Albany and upstate New York. Terry Farrigan, who leads the company, and 18 staff members will continue to serve area clients.



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Pandemic elevates need for separate status for O&P

BY THERESA FLAHERTY, Managing Editor

WASHINGTON - O&P practitioners have renewed their push to be recognized as clinicians – a distinction they say is critical now more than ever to ensure access to care.

While stakeholders have long fought for this, the COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the need for it, says Justin Beland, director of government affairs for the American Orthotic and Prosthetic Association, because only certain clinicians have been able to get reimbursed for telehealth services during the public health emergency.

“It’s come to the forefront, the inability to bill for telehealth visits,” he said. “It’s not great for the profession or the patients. They can bill for the device, but not subsequent follow-ups to see



Justin Beland

if the patient is doing well.”

The Medicare O&P Patient-Centered Care Act, introduced March 17 by Rep. Mike Thompson, D-Calif.,

would create separate statutory requirements for the provision of orthoses and prostheses to distinguish practitioners from DME suppliers.

The bill also seeks to: restore the term “minimal self-adjustment” to more clearly define off-the-shelf orthoses; and prohibit the practice of “drop shipping” custom orthoses and prostheses.

“We have Hanger and a few other large providers, but it would be difficult for private

practitioners (to participate in competitive bidding),” said John Kenney, PhD., and vice president of clinical development at Ongoing Care Solutions. “(With the drop shipping of OTS devices), that only requires a delivery receipt, so you’re getting a brace in a box and that can certainly be provided by anyone who wins the bid. I worry that, if you have a patient with grade 4 osteoarthritis, the patient is not appropriately served.”

AOPA is urging stakeholders to ask their members of Congress to support the bill and expects a Senate companion bill in April, says Beland.

“This is the most important issue to members and practitioners, and they’ve already sent 400 letters to Congress,” he said. “There is a lot of education that has to be done on the hill.” **HME**

AASM makes sense of Google’s Sleep Sensing tech

BY TRACY ORZEL, Contributing Writer

DARIEN, Ill. – Google customers struggling to get a good night’s sleep can now get evidence-based recommendations and tips from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine through the tech giant’s new Sleep Sensing technology.

Available on the second-generation Nest Hub, Sleep Sensing analyzes snoring, coughing and the environment to assess how well users sleep. After learning a user’s sleep habits and

patterns, the device gives personalized insights and recommendations that draw on the science available from the sleep community and the expertise of AASM.

“Sleep tracking is becoming more common,” said Dr. Raman Malhotra, AASM president-elect. “People are taking more control over their health and wellness,



Dr. Malhotra

and sleep timing and estimated sleep duration are health behaviors they can track at home, just like counting steps.”

One of the advantages of sleep trackers is that they’re easy to use at home, so they capture data in a real-world setting in the individual’s own bedroom environment, says Malhotra. They can also gather data over weeks or months, and unlike wearable devices, they’re not disruptive to the user.

On the flip side, sleep track-

SLEEP TRACKING SEE NEXT PAGE

Option Care Health prevails in Q4

‘Our referral patterns across a broad portfolio of therapies and geographies continues to be volatile, given the pandemic’

BY THERESA FLAHERTY, Managing Editor

BANNOCKBURN, Ill. - Option Care Health saw double-digit growth in revenues as the company took advantage of its technology platform to respond to the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, said CEO

John Rademacher on a recent earnings call.

Option Care Health reported net revenues of \$804.7 million for the fourth quarter of 2020, an increase of 11.6% compared to the same quarter in 2019.

“Our ability to quickly pivot and utilize our technology platform more fully through telemedicine features like virtual visits and discharge support, and collaboration tools that

allowed our clinical teams and remote workforce to continue to excel contributed to delivering consistent high-quality care, strong clinical outcomes and exceptional patient satisfaction,” he said.

Net revenues for the full year were about \$3 billion, an increase of 31.3% compared to 2019. Adjusted EBITDA for the quarter was \$67.7 million and

OPTION CARE SEE NEXT PAGE

INSIGHTS

What’s your brand?

BY THERESA FLAHERTY, Managing Editor

MASTECTOMY BOUTIQUES are in a position to empower breast cancer survivors to live “fully and beautifully,” says Dana Donofree, founder of AnaOno, a post-mastectomy clothing designer, and a survivor herself.

To do that, providers need to engage with survivors through the three pillars of marketing: commerce, content and community, she says.

“View your activity through these three pillars to determine the who, the what, and the why,” said Donofree during her recent EW Focus Conference session, “How to Engage Your Community Through Marketing and Events.” “Each of these feeds the other two, and they may shift in importance.”

FILL IN YOUR BLANK

Donofree says providers should ask themselves “Do I have a brand?” While they may think the answer is “no,” she says the answer is always “yes.” The key is to figure out what unique services you provide to help your customers with their unique needs.

“Consumers want someone they can trust,” she said. “Let’s build your brand. You are no longer the local DME or the main street mastectomy boutique. You are ‘fill in your blank.’”

When customers need something, they will remember “fill in the blank,” instead of automatically going to Amazon or Google.

CONTENT GOLD

While it’s important to make sure a website provides useful information, such as hours and location, and contact information, it’s also a place to tell a company’s story, through emails, blogs, social media and video.

“Store owners are sitting

BRAND SEE NEXT PAGE

BRIEFS

PE firm puts PromptCare Companies up for sale

NEW PROVIDENCE, R.I. - The Halifax Group, which invested in PromptCare Companies in 2017, is now looking to sell the company, according to PE Hub. The process is in its second rounds, with first-round bids already submitted, according to the publication. Because PromptCare has two distinct businesses – home infusion therapy and complex respiratory therapy – there may be two separate transactions, according to PE Hub. PromptCare has nearly tripled in size since Halifax made its investment in 2017, expanding its presence beyond the mid-Atlantic, according to the publication. Most recently, on March 3, the company announced it had acquired the assets of NBN Infusions, expanding its footprint in the Northeast.

Better Health makes debut

SAN FRANCISCO - Better Health, an online supplier of urological and ostomy supplies, has launched with \$3.5 million in seed funding. The provider, which offers “white glove service,” also has national contracts with major insurers, including Humana and Oscar Health. “Better Health improves the lives of patients who use medical supplies by getting them the best products in a timely, cost-effective and stress-free manner,” said Naama Staubler Breckler, who co-founded Better Health and previously started CompactCath. “More importantly, we provide our members with education and support, so they’re better prepared to manage their chronic condition in the long run.”

NCPA releases two reports

ALEXANDRIA, Va. - The National Community Pharmacists Association has released a 2020 COVID-19 special report highlighting its work over the past year helping independent pharmacists navigate the pandemic and adapt to changes. NCPA also released its 2020 NCPA Advocacy Annual Report, a comprehensive review of its broader advocacy efforts on behalf of independent community pharmacists, including work to change the pharmacy payment model and rein in pharmacy benefit managers through the Rutledge v. PCMA Supreme Court case and other pathways.

Option Care Health to sell shares

BANNOCKBURN, Ill. - Option Care Health agreed to sell 12 million shares of the company’s common stock at \$20 per share in an underwritten public offering. The selling stockholder, an affiliate of Madison Dearborn Partners, also granted the underwriter a 30-day option to purchase up to 1.8 million additional shares of common stock. The offering closed March 17. This sale of shares represents approximately 6.7% of the current shares outstanding. Option Care Health will receive no proceeds from the offering.

Pandemic solidifies role of telemedicine in sleep care, says new paper

DARIEN, ILL.— Sleep medicine has proven to be a specialty that can offer complete and quality care remotely, the American Academy of Sleep Medicine says in a recently published position paper.

While the technology to remotely connect doctor and patient has been in place for years, its use was limited until the pandemic, when CMS lifted restrictions on telehealth reimbursement and private companies followed suit.

“Delivering care during the pandemic has proven to providers and insurers that telemedicine offers patients safe, secure and effective sleep care,” said Dr. Douglas Kirsch, chair of the AASM Telemedicine Presidential Committee, which wrote the paper. “The AASM will continue to advocate for permanent coverage and reimbursement of telemedicine services with CMS and third-party payers.”

The paper, which was published online in the Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine, addresses several key issues in the delivery of sleep care using telemedicine, including quality and value, privacy and safety, health advocacy and future directions.

The paper shares new evidence that telemedicine is effective in the diagnosis and management of obstructive sleep apnea and improves adherence to CPAP therapy. The paper also acknowledges opportunities for improvement in the adoption and use of telemedicine, including compliance with patient privacy laws, additional training for providers, and awareness of limited access among disadvantaged populations.

“Telemedicine improves access to care, but we need to be cautious that its use doesn’t introduce new health inequities in underserved communities that may lack the necessary technologies,” Kirsch said. **HME**

OPTION CARE

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

\$221.7 million for the full year, up 27.7% and 69.5%, respectively.

Those increases were driven primarily by growth in the company’s chronic portfolio, said CFO Mike Shapiro.

“Standard of care initiatives continue to resonate and benefit our chronic portfolio, while at the same time, newer therapies introduced for conditions (like) myasthenia gravis and chronic inflammatory conditions contributed to strong growth,” he said.

Option Care Health also saw modest improvement in acute therapies in the fourth quarter, said Shapiro.

“Our referral patterns across a broad

portfolio of therapies and geographies continues to be volatile, given the ongoing pandemic impact,” he said. “But, nonetheless, we see revenue growth incorporating a number of these dynamics.”

While Option Care Health remains cautious during a still “dynamic and challenging situation,” the company is also adapting as new care models emerge, with Rademacher pointing to its recently announced partnership with Amedisys to provide COVID antibody infusion therapy in skilled nursing and assisted living facilities. The company is also entering the home stretch of its integration with BioScrip.

“I’ve never been more confident in this team,” he said. “As we shift from integration to acceleration, the unique platform we’ve created is clearly evident.” **HME**

SLEEP TRACKING

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

ers might cause anxiety in some users — or create an unhealthy obsession with getting the “perfect sleep” — making it even harder to sleep, says Malhotra.

“This is especially true if the device fails to help the user understand the context of their data,” he said.

While sleep trackers shouldn’t be used as a substitute for sleep studies, they do help

bridge the communication gap between patients who might be hesitant to speak up about their sleep issues with their medical providers and ask for help or insight.

“The strong consumer demand for sleep tracking devices is a positive sign of the growing recognition that sleep is essential to health,” said Malhotra. “I think we’ll continue to see the tech sector develop new innovations to satisfy this demand with user-friendly devices that provide personalized feedback.” **HME**

BRAND

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

on a pile of content gold,” she said. “You are the expert. You hear customer insights and feedback and challenges. Content can support the community in different ways. Ask yourself what resources and talent do you have available to you.”

THE HOLY GRAIL

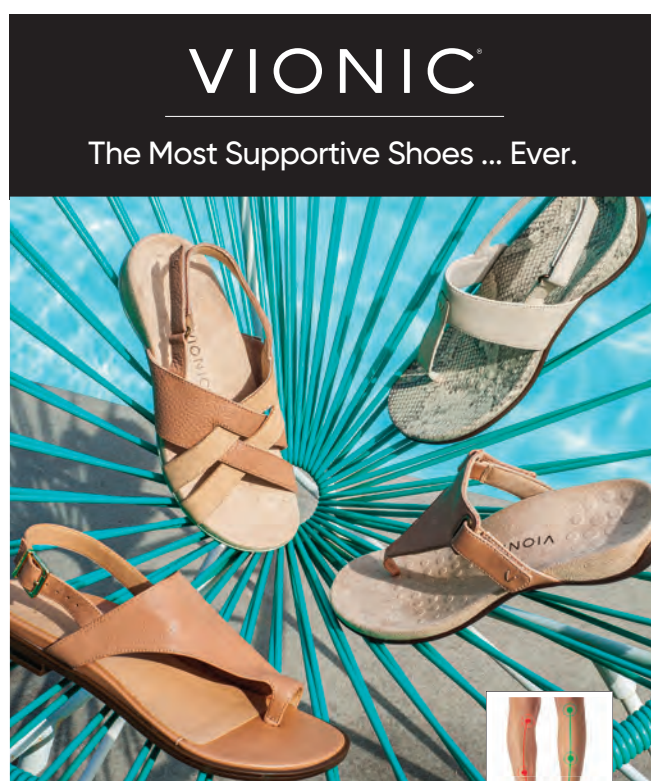
By far, the most valuable asset a business has is its email list, which Donofree says

can generate \$38 for every \$1 spent.

“Share assets and pop in consistently to say hi,” she says. “It gives them a way to get information and keeps your brand in front of them over and over, so instead of them saying, ‘Amazon,’ they say, ‘let me check ‘fill in the blank.’”

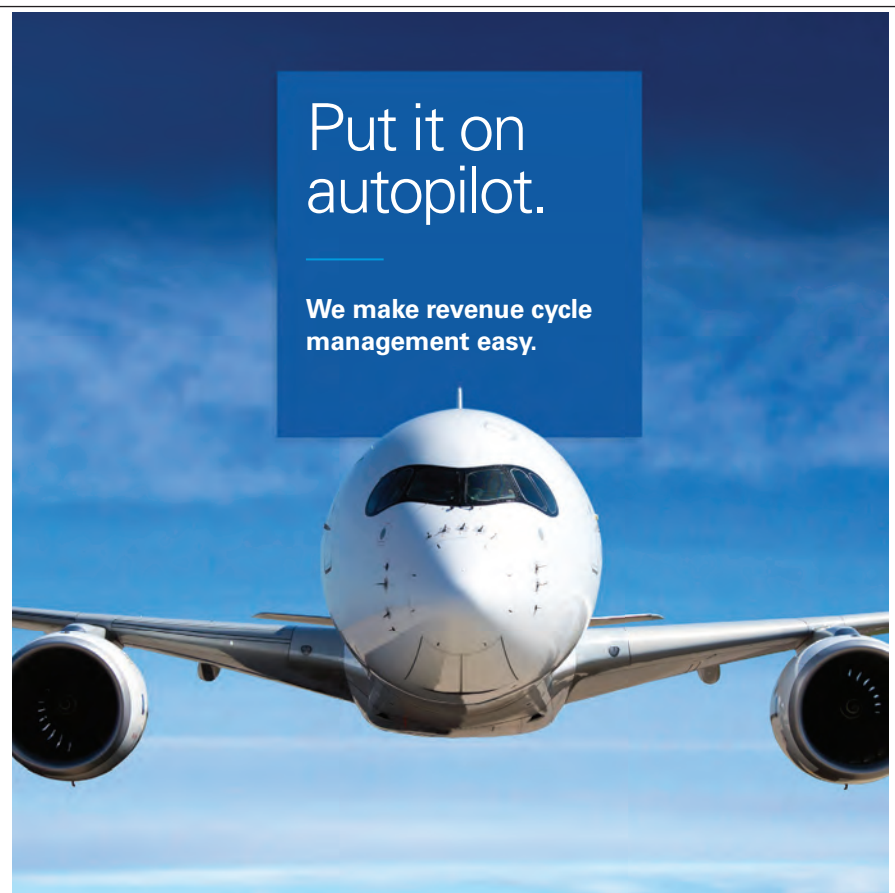
Don’t forget good old mail campaigns, says Donofree. Send a postcard when there’s a brand launch in the store, or let them know you are re-opening.

“Supporting local business is more important than ever,” she says. **HME**



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Pandemic accelerates need for interoperability

BY JOHN ANDREWS, Contributing Editor

BETWEEN ZOOM meetings, working remotely and virtual schooling, COVID-19 dramatically altered the way we connect with each other over the past year and in some respects, it forced people to use and better understand communications technology. It is emblematic of the adage “necessity is the mother of invention” – especially when it comes to business automation and interoperability for HME providers.

Information technology specialists are encouraged by signs of burgeoning connectivity within the health care provider continuum, whether due to the pandemic's influence or not.

“COVID has accelerated technology adoption across the health care continuum, including HME, and has forced a more patient-centric viewpoint,” said Nick Knowlton, vice president of business development for Atlanta-based Brightree. “This has, in turn, highlighted the need for more integrated systems that can enhance the patient journey. Increasingly, providers are adopting connected technologies like remote patient monitoring, automated resupply and patient-facing tools that offer transparency and multiple, low-effort touchpoints for engagement.”

Consequently, the pandemic has accelerated the existing need for interoperability between HME providers and their referral sources, “who often feel patients disappear upon transitioning into post-acute care,” Knowlton said, citing a survey that found nearly 100% of acute and ambulatory providers are engaging with other care providers through interoperability and increasingly expect their downstream counterparts in post-acute care to do the same.

“Interoperability and connected tools, such as ePrescribe, eliminate the burden of managing fax traffic and extraneous phone

CATEGORY

Billing Systems

COVID EFFECT

■ **Virtual embrace:** As the year-long pandemic steered society toward virtual communications, employment and school, the HME industry realized the value of technology as a tool to continue providing quality patient care.

INTERFACE FACTOR

■ **Continuum contact:** Interoperability across the health care spectrum has been a challenge for HME providers, but experts emphasize that richer interfaces with referral sources, patients, suppliers, post-acute providers and payers result in greatly enhanced efficiencies.

TECH POTENTIAL

■ **Beyond billing:** Modern billing systems have enough functionality to run an entire HME enterprise, including asset management, inventory and logistics, compliance management and business intelligence.

calls, which transitioned from simply burdensome to nearly untenable during the early work-from-home days,” he said. “Interoperability and connected care ensure everyone in a patient's care journey has the necessary information to provide the best possible experience. The pressures of the pandemic did accelerate the adoption trends we were already seeing.”

Doug Iversen, director of sales and marketing for Billings, Mont.-based Computers Unlimited, isn't convinced that the pandemic is directly responsible for the advancement of interoperability in health care, but maintains that “the operational changes introduced by the pandemic have certainly underscored and accelerated the need for richer systematic interfaces. Providers were forced to shift the way they deliver services to their patients and, in doing so, they have been challenged with changing their workflows and delivery

methodologies and adjusting to the payer billing and documentation rules related to the pandemic.”

The pandemic has also served as a reminder to HME providers of “how important it is to be agile and adaptable to ever-changing payer requirements,” added Jeanette Eklund, product manager for Brightree.

For example, she points out that when Medicare lifted its local coverage determinations on April 6, 2020, providers suddenly had much more flexibility around documentation requirements for reimbursement. Brightree's new Comprehensive Patient Intake tool allows providers to take control of this process and define the rules they want their staff to adhere to on a per-payer and per-product basis.

“With this change, we found some providers wanted to adhere to the LCDs they had been using, while others wanted to take advantage of the new flexibility,” she said. “This flexibility and customization built into the product enables providers to quickly enact changes based on new regulations, while helping them remain consistent across their organization.”

Continued development of the interoperability between various software systems that interact with clients will enhance business operations and provide a much better patient journey, said Bruce Gehring, senior vice president of business development for Overland Park, Kan.-based Allegiance Group.

“Most patient payment issues stem from customers not having a clear expectation of their payment responsibility,” he said. “Focusing on procedures that clearly establish the responsibility and payment guarantees through an established method and clear digital communication channels will do wonders in minimizing provider losses from the lack of cash recovery practices. Working together through user advisory partnerships will be critical in developing the service

enhancements to help prioritize their development so we all flourish in this new normal environment.”

REALIZING POTENTIAL

Billing system technology has gotten so sophisticated that its functions go well beyond billing into all areas of operation. But are HME providers capitalizing on the capabilities? Eklund says yes.

“HME providers are leveraging technology now more than ever, especially to communicate with referral sources, vendors and their patients,” she said. “In the last year, the pandemic has accelerated adoption of technologies such as ePrescribe/eReferral and electronic drop ship as a preferred fulfillment option. Providers have also been leveraging automated resupply software to increase and maintain their resupply business, helping with financial stability throughout the pandemic. The operational efficiencies gained through these automated electronic workflows during COVID will serve as a solid foundation for further expansion once its behind us.”

Courtney Baker, medical sales and marketing liaison for Computers Unlimited says its array of systems help providers “improve the patient experience with multiple fulfillment choices for each patient order, including low-contact mobile delivery to the patient's home.” The integrated delivery app is designed to automate several delivery functions, producing accurate data and quicker confirmation of deliveries.

Other CU system focal points include asset management, compliance management and business intelligence.

“Systems continue to evolve to provide rich and predictive information, but there's a catch – it is all based on having the data,” Baker said. “If a provider's system is not capturing the data, fewer of the important questions cannot be answered – having ‘a hunch’ will only get you so far.” **HME**

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ONLINE SHOPPING

ResMed maximizes awareness

BY LIZ BEAULIEU, Editor

SAN DIEGO - ResMed is positioning a new online shop as a way for the manufacturer to be a "strong partner" for its HME provider customers.

The company in March launched shop.ResMed.com to sell its AirMini travel CPAP devices to cash-paying customers.

"By setting a benchmark for the online patient experience, we're maximizing patients' awareness of and demand for the products and services HMEs pro-

vide," said Grant Ovzinsky, senior director, ResMed.

ResMed launched the AirMini in 2017, making it available through HME providers, online retailers and other distributors.

The company says those HME providers, online retailers and other distributors have all been key channels for sales of the AirMini since its launch four years ago, but it wanted to further expand the company's presence on the web due to studies showing 76% of



Grant Ovzinsky

U.S. consumers go online to research health-related topics and buy products.

"As more and more consumers go online to research and purchase health-related products, ResMed is building its brand visibility and brand experience with consumers," Ovzinsky said.

ResMed says it will continue to support sales of the AirMini through HME providers, online retailers and other distribu-

tors through digital advertising, launch events and other efforts, but the online shop will allow the company to amplify those efforts.

"The ResMed Shop intends to market across a variety of digital channels, reaching patients who have requested to receiving marketing messages directly from ResMed.com," Ovzinsky said.

The company says it does not have plans to offer products other than the AirMini and related accessories for cash through the online shop. [HME](#)

Designer wins \$1M to develop smart chair



PHOENIX INSTINCT beat out more than 80 teams.

BY TRACY ORZEL, Contributing Writer

FORRES, Scotland - Phoenix Instinct was recently named the winner of Toyota's Mobility Unlimited Challenge, a three-year long contest meant to drive innovation in the field of assistive technologies, for its intelligent ultra-light carbon fiber wheelchair.

The small, Scotland-based company beat out more than 80 teams from 28 countries around the world for the title and—more importantly—the \$1 million prize to further develop its Phoenix i, which continuously adjusts its own center of gravity to match the user's center of gravity. And that's just the beginning, says Founder and CEO Andrew Slorance.

"Phoenix i will have a range

SMART CHAIR SEE NEXT PAGE

Permobil adopts 'branded house'

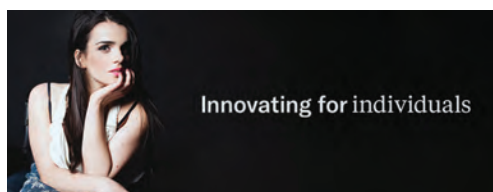
All of the company's products are now Permobil-branded products, and names like ROHO and TiLite will become product names

BY LIZ BEAULIEU, Editor

NASHVILLE, Tenn. - Permobil's significant growth over the past several years, which includes multiple acquisitions, was a big reason for the company's recent rebrand and new website.

"As Permobil has grown both organically and inorganically, we had a need to implement a clear brand strategy, and also evolve our brand to reflect who we want to be and what we stand for going into the future," said Chuck Witkowski, president, Permobil Americas. "Moving forward, we are using a 'branded house' strategy, whereby all products are now Permobil branded products, and names like ROHO and TiLite will become product names."

Within the past decade, Permobil's acquisitions in the Americas have included TiLite in 2014, ROHO in 2015, Comfort



PERMOBIL HAS ALSO DEBUTED a new brand promise, a nod to its focus on end users.

Company in 2017, Max Mobility in 2017, and Ottobock's OBSS in 2018.

Part of this process has also been uniting Permobil's products under a new brand promise, "Innovating for Individuals," a nod to the company's responsibility to advocate for access on behalf of its end users, Witkowski says.

"Additionally, our significant investments in innovation are focused on more than just the hardware – we are focused on innovating in services, connectivity, and improving the ease with which our customers can access our solutions," he said.

A good example of this is My Permobil, an app that leverages the Permobil Connect platform to allow users to view data like battery charge, travel history, and seat activity usage, while also allowing providers to perform remote diagnostics.

"We are working with our customers to help them access real-time data that can be used to improve the aftermarket service and repair process," Witkowski said.

Permobil has released a new global website that serves as a vehicle to communicate the company's new promise and

PERMOBIL SEE NEXT PAGE



Permobil Foundation donates wheelchair

The Permobil Foundation gifted a new Permobil wheelchair to Gary Miracle at a MercyMe concert on March 6 in Jacksonville, Fla. MercyMe, a Nashville-based Christian rock band, shared Miracle's recovery story in their new video and song "Say I Won't." "It was a very emotional moment, a celebration of his faith and perseverance," said Ashley Davis, executive director of the Permobil Foundation. Miracle, the band's former merchandising rep and tour bus driver lost both of his arms and legs after falling into septic shock in January 2020.

BRIEFS

LUCI builds sales team

NASHVILLE, Tenn. - LUCI has formed a LUCI Commercial Market Team through partnerships with 10 independent representation groups. The partnerships span 47 states, increasing the availability of the company's smart wheelchair technology to thousands of additional power wheelchair riders across the country. The Commercial Market Team is comprised of Brewis Group, FMT & Associates, Grams Consulting, Independent Medical Representatives, Rehab Marketing Inc., John Monroe, Provision Associates, Rabson Rehab Sales, Southwestern Medical Reps and Target Mobility.

Graham-Field wins award

ATLANTA - Graham-Field has won Medium Manufacturer of the Year Award in the 10th Annual Movers & Makers Awards by Partnership Gwinnett. Partnership Gwinnett, in collaboration with Gwinnett Technical College, announced the winners of the awards in March during a ceremony at Infinite Energy Forum. "Graham-Field is very proud of the hard work invested in our manufacturing facility in Gwinnett County," said Ken Spett, CEO of GF Health Products. "Our responsibility is to provide world-class quality and service to both health care providers and patients."

Oventus signs first VGM member

BRISBANE, Australia - Oventus Medical has signed on its first member of VGM & Associates: InHome Oxygen and Medical Equipment in Pennsylvania. Per the agreement, InHome Oxygen will offer O2Vent therapy as a treatment alternative to patients who find CPAP therapy challenging. Potential patients will now be able to visit an InHome Oxygen store – physically, online or over the phone – and schedule a telehealth consultation, followed by a dentist guided at-home telehealth impression and device delivery consultation. Oventus and VGM announced a marketing agreement in late 2020.

Invacare adds Fehr to board of directors

ELYRIA, Ohio - Invacare has appointed Stephanie Fehr, who has a strong background in human resources and talent development for leading health care and technology businesses, to its board of directors. Fehr currently serves as executive vice president and chief human capital officer of UnitedHealthcare, a division of UnitedHealth Group. Fehr will serve as a member of Invacare's Compensation and Management Development Committee.

3B Medical named fast-growing company

WINTER HAVEN, Fla. - 3B Medical has been recognized as one of Florida's fastest growing private companies by Inc. magazine. The manufacturer of the Lumin disinfecting device and other products ranked No. 53 on the annual Inc. 5000 Regionals: Florida. Between 2017 and 2019, the 250 companies on the list had an average growth rate of 202%.



Search



3B Medical's happy dance

3B Medical has produced a video of its staff participating in the "Jerusalem" dance challenge. "This has been an insanely difficult year to cope with," said Alex Lucio, CEO. "3B picked up the gauntlet. Some of our staff rolled their eyes, but once we set out to do it, it became a lot of fun and really improved office morale." 3B now challenges other DME manufacturers and providers to create their own videos. The challenge, which has gone viral, started when an Angolan dance troupe recorded themselves dancing to "Jerusalem," a hit South African house track by DJ Master KG and vocalist Nomcebo, last year. Now everyone from Romanian firefighters to Austrian Airlines employees to flash mobs have made videos of themselves dancing to the song.

ITAMAR MEDICAL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

that Itamar commissioned and how the results will help position the company for the boom in home sleep testing.

HME NEWS: One of the findings from the survey that I found interesting was: Of the 33% of respondents who indicated having used a wearable device or an app to track and/or monitor their sleep, just 41% indicated they took the results seriously. How does Itamar distinguish itself from wearable devices?

Joao Mendes-Roter: I think it's important to set the difference between consumer-based wearables and clinical-grade wearables. I think wearables and wellness products are doing great work in getting consumers to take ownership of their health, but what if medical intervention is needed? This is where companies like Itamar come into play. Our products are prescribed and reimbursed.

HME: 51% of respondents indicated they would not take a sleep test or seek help for a sleep disorder due to concerns over cost (27.5%), inconvenience (20%) and fear of infection given the pandemic (16%).

Mendes-Roter: That's a data point that really helps us. Our main product, WatchPAT ONE, costs 10% of an in-lab sleep test; it's comfortable and it's easy to use through an app; and it's disposable, so it's safe. We are happy that the resistance that was reported is actually a non-issue for our product.

HME: The survey found 89% of respondents are uninformed of the wider applications and significance of sleep apnea.

Mendes-Roter: We're very focused on solving the patient pathway for sleep therapy but also integrating that pathway into other disease journeys. The reason why this is so important: There are patients who use CPAP therapy for a total of four hours and not every day. What happens when they're not on therapy? Physicians don't have that visibility. **HME**

SMART CHAIR

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

of sensors and ports that can be equipped with new capabilities as they evolve," he said.

Slorance, a wheelchair user himself, suffered a spinal injury in 1983, and says that, while technology has evolved drastically, wheelchairs haven't kept up.

"It made no sense to me that the product wheelchair users rely on more than any other, isn't advancing beyond its basic mechanical creation," he said. "A smart wheelchair could warn of a raised paving slab ahead, intelligently add braking on a steep hill, connect with a smart home, and accurately count calorie burn and distance travelled."

Slorance's next step is turning the working prototype into a production model, which will take about 18 months. This involves implementing production processes, testing the chair and electronics, and gathering feedback from a user group. Roll out will start in the U.K. and build toward global distribution.

"I believe the new chair will reduce injuries for manual wheelchair users," he said. "Once we can evidence this, we should see insurers come onboard." **HME**

PERMOBIL

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

unified product range, as well as bring together its regional businesses.

"We're just at the starting gate of what we plan to do with the website," Witkowski said. "There will be additional functionality, some of it designed to make it easier for providers to do business with us, and for end users to quickly find what they're looking for." **HME**

RESMED SURVEY

Poor sleep quality: Is it stress or apnea?

SAN DIEGO - For half of Americans, stress over the past year of the pandemic is negatively impacting the quality of their sleep, according to the results of nationwide survey of 1,000 adults conducted by ResMed.

While COVID-related stresses are often noticeable, one of the biggest stealers of sleep might be something people can't easily detect: sleep apnea, the company says.

"While data show that stress and worry are key factors impacting many people's sleep, now is an opportunity for everyone to take measure of all the factors that could be impacting the quality of sleep, which could include sleep disorders that can have negative long-term impacts to overall health," said Carlos M. Nunez, M.D., chief medical officer for ResMed.

ResMed published the survey in conjunction with National Sleep Awareness Week (March 14-20) and World Sleep Day (March 19), and as part of "Sleep for a Better Tomorrow," an education and outreach initiative to build awareness of the critical role good sleep plays in physical and mental health.

The survey found 78% of those who



snore aren't concerned it could be related to an underlying health condition, despite snoring being a top symptom of sleep apnea. Additionally, nearly half of respondents said their doctor had not asked them about their sleep quality, reinforcing the importance of consumers being aware of the potential health impacts of poor sleep and acting on key sleep apnea symptoms, such as snoring. **HME**

SUPPLIER CERT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

not inexpensive."

NRRTS, which is working with an instructional designer, estimates the certification program will cost about \$240,000 to complete. The organization has spent about \$40,000 on the program so far and seeks to raise the remaining \$200,000.

Walker considers the program a wise investment, as it will develop a pathway that will help to guarantee a steady stream of new professionals.

"The need (for the program) is emphasized by the shortage of qualified suppliers," she said. "I've heard there are some suppliers reaching that age of retirement, and there is a greater need for CRT due to aging baby boomers."

The program will also help to guarantee a "baseline" of competency among complex rehab professionals, Walker says.

"The successful person who completes this - they'll be able to show their certificate to their employer and then their employer will know exactly what the person's knowledge is," she said.

Longer term, with more certificate holders in the field, the industry will see improved performances by professionals and improved outcomes for clients, as well as the accelerated development of professionals, leading to other skills like molded seating, Walker says.

"I think you would say that's a win-win-win," she said.

If that's not enough, Walker says the "visionaries" who support the program will also receive, depending on the amount of their pledges, one or more free "seats" to the full program or free access to the first course.

"We're hoping (people will) consider it as (they) look toward the future," she said. **HME**

BRIEFS

Ventec names Alwan president, CEO

BOTHELL, Wash. - Ventec Life Systems has named Jim Alwan president and CEO. Alwan has more than 25 years of experience in medical device management, most recently as senior vice president and general manager of the Hospital Respiratory Care Business at Philips Healthcare. Before that, he was vice president, Innovation and Business Development, at Becton Dickinson. "Jim brings a track record of industry accomplishment and effective leadership to Ventec," said Jim Hickey, chairman of Ventec's board of directors. "He has a unique blend of market knowledge, general management, and engineering skills. We are pleased that Jim has joined Ventec and look forward to significant company growth under his guidance." Ventec, the maker of the VOCSN Multi-Function Ventilator, partnered with GM to ramp up production of its vents in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

VGM adds LUCI, Ardo

WATERLOO, Iowa - U.S. Rehab, a division of VGM, has partnered with LUCI to provide the company's smart wheelchair technology to its members. "We are honored to be in a relationship with LUCI and have the ability to acquire this new top technology in the industry and make this product accessible to the independent providers and CRT providers in the U.S.," said Greg Packer, president of U.S. Rehab. VGM has partnered with Ardo to offer the company's new products for expecting and breastfeeding mothers to VGM and Essentially Women members.

Drive DeVilbiss Healthcare

Folding Knee Walker

Capable of supporting 350 pounds, the Folding Knee Walker helps keep users mobile and independent while recovering from a foot or lower-leg injury. The knee walker also features an entry-level price point, a small footprint for optimal shelf and storage space, and retail packaging to help users self-educate on product features and benefits. Other features: tight turning radius that allows for maximum maneuverability in narrow spaces, and tool-free assembly.



WWW.DRIVEMEDICAL.COM

NorthShore Care Supply

MegaMax

MegaMax briefs are now available in tie-dye and black. Massive absorbency and wicking ability. Large, heavy-duty, re-fastenable tape tabs with a full landing zone help to keep the brief snug and comfortable. Extra-wide, extra-long absorbent core provider added protection for restless sleepers. Smooth plastic exterior resists sagging and odors. Other features: body-close elastics in front and rear waistband, and up to 12 hours of protection.



WWW.NORTHSHORE.COM

Responsive Respiratory

Compact Multi-Cylinder Delivery Cart

Designed with space-saving in mind, the new compact cart offers greater maneuverability within a warehouse or oxygen cylinder filling center. The open front multi-cylinder cart transports up to 144 M6 cylinders or 42 D, E and M9 cylinders, and features rugged steel, all-welded supports with durable powder coat paint finish designed to maintain its performance under industrial use. The cart also features Easy-On replaceable five-inch casters in two caster styles.



WWW.RESPONDO2.COM

VECTOR by K&K Resources

ZIPPY - Pediatric Wheelchair

Pediatric wheelchairs with comfortable seating, robust design and a sporty look that kids love. They're built to operate under tough conditions. The ZIPPY - Pediatric Wheelchair features a lightweight aluminum frame, nylon upholstery, adjustable foot-plate, treaded tires, adjustable push handle height, cushioned seat and brilliant yellow color. The wheelchair is available with anti-tippers, brake extenders and cup holders, and offers a three-year warranty on the frame and cross bars.



HTTPS://KNKRESOURCES.COM

JOIN THE CLUB

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Dana Lesperance: I'm still learning how to use it, but as I started to look for different forums and rooms within the platform, it gives you suggestions. Health care best practices, marketing and branding – those are the types of rooms that I'm following. Yesterday, at 4:30, I jumped on (a discussion) about marketing and branding. They were debating where the line is between the two.

HME: Are there any forums yet about home medical equipment?

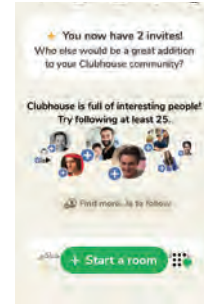
Lesperance: I can search CPAP and anything related to sleep, and listen in from a more macro perspective. As a whole, the industry is starting to integrate cash sale items like CBD and sound machines. How do we tie in other sleep-related items?

HME: So if more HME providers are invited, that opens to the door for forums on topics specific to HME?

Lesperance: It's really trying to figure out how to position HME in those forums, or specific industry leaders. Say AAHomecare wants to have a group discussion, right now it's a limited number of industry folks who can get on that forum and listen. Over time, that will expand and be something we could utilize more as an industry and can give ourselves more credibility.

HME: There are some active HME providers on various social media platforms. Is the industry taking advantage of what those platforms offer?

Lesperance: I think that we need to step up as an industry and be more engaged around social media. Especially on Twitter, I think it's wise as a company to follow the people you would like to follow you back. We follow key legislators; we follow policy makers; we follow AAH, VGM and HME News. When you folks put out tangible data or news, we can retweet that and share it back to our base. They are getting informed and it's circular. **HME**



GLOOKO FUNDING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

solutions, will also use the funding to speed up its expansion into co-morbidities like hypertension and cardiovascular conditions, says Johannesson.

'LEAN IN'

A big reason Glooko saw its remote monitoring business take off last year was its decision in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic to offer its platform for free to people with diabetes and medical clinics to keep them safe and connected, says Johannesson.

"We expect that after the pandemic subsides, we'll start to work to convert those to paying customers at some level," he said. "Business has taken off as, (providers) are really seeing the value of being able to share the data and being able to connect with patients."

CONNECT

In addition to the new funding, Glooko will continue to leverage strong partnerships with leaders in the diabetes space, including Insulet and Novo Nordisk, says Johannesson. Those partnerships include device integration agreements and data sharing.

"We're the connective tissue across the diabetes ecosystem," he said. "I think the companies that are having an impact in this space see the value of interoperability and shared connectivity."

INNOVATE

The pace of innovation around technology that supports people with diabetes and other chronic conditions will continue to accelerate, says Johannesson.

"The name of the game is engaging consumers, and leveraging data and analysis (tools) like artificial intelligence," he said. **HME**

APRIA'S EARNINGS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

negative pressure wound therapy business was also up 4%.

The company has increased its guidance for 2021 to net revenue of \$1.11 billion to \$1.14 billion to account for CMS's recent decision to remove the budget neutrality requirement for oxygen – a requirement that increased reimbursement rates for evolving technologies like portable oxygen concentrators by reducing rates for more traditional therapies.

"The budget neutrality fix, coupled with the competitive bidding outcome around 2021, provides the industry with an increase in oxygen reimbursement rates from CMS and stable reimbursement rates for the other products that were formerly subject to the competitive bidding rate adjustments," said CEO Dan Starck.

Also looking at 2021, Apria expects to ramp up organic growth, as rentals pick back up, and inorganic growth, as the company cautiously dips its toe into the hot M&A market. Already this year, it has made one small tuck-in acquisition in southern California.

"For us, it's really about getting started and getting started on the right foot with a small deal to start in Q1 and pursue more as we go through the remainder of the year," Starck said. "So, I think we'll slowly build here." **HME**

REGINA GILLISPIE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

to keep in mind that, during a power outage, we were keeping people in their homes. They appreciate getting that information, because it helps them go to CMS on our behalf."

ACTIVE ADVOCATE

Actively engaging with her senators and their health LAs on social media is only one way Gillispie tries to "stay in front of them."

"I email them once every two weeks to give an update on what's going on," she said. "Even when the riots happened on Jan. 6, I was emailing all those staffers in those offices, checking on them. They all got back to me. Now when I go to (Washington, D.C.), Sen. Manchin knows who I am and Sen. Capito knows who I am." **HME**



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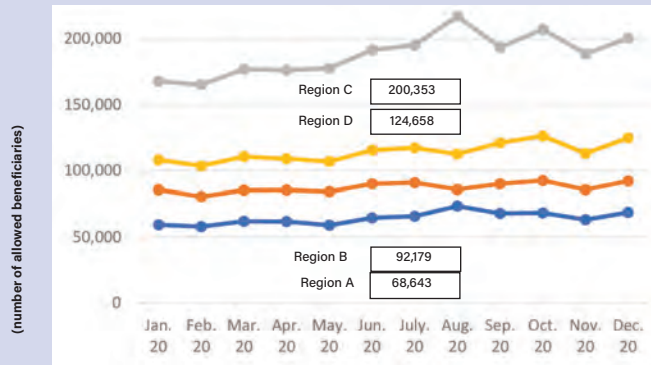
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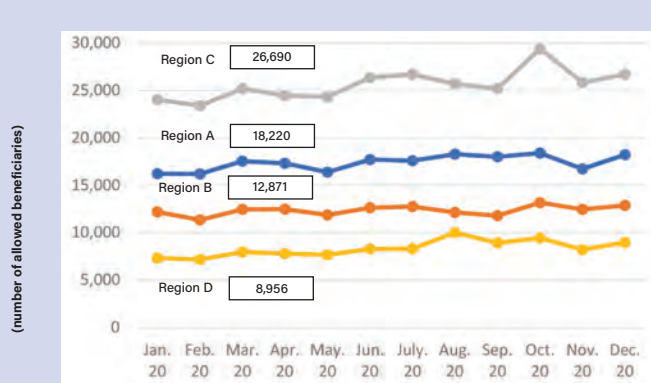
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Medicare Market Marker

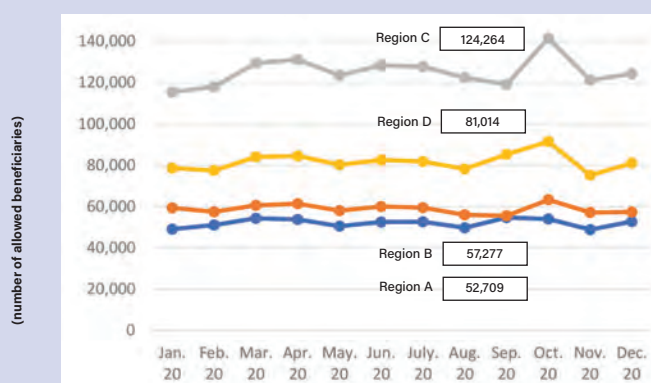
E1390: OXYGEN CONCENTRATOR



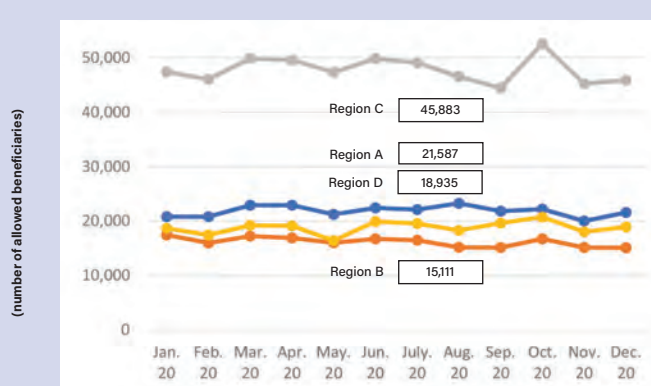
E0260: SEMI-ELECTRIC HOSPITAL BED



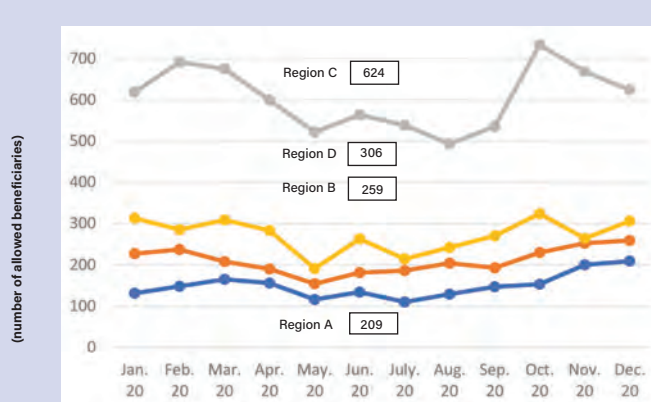
E0601: CPAP



K0001: STANDARD WHEELCHAIR



K0823: POWER WHEELCHAIR**



**We are now tracking K0823 claims with certain modifiers (NU, UE or RR/KH) to better reflect the actual number of new allowed beneficiaries under the 13-month capped rental.

*The Medicare Market Marker provides a monthly look at the number of Medicare beneficiaries for whom the four MACs have allowed a claims payment.

HMEDATABANK.COM

The HME DataBank has the latest Medicare reimbursement data for the top 1,000 HME providers nationally in 261 key product categories, as well as for all of the products in the NCB program. You can determine your market share, look for new product opportunities and check out your competition using the latest available Medicare data. Go to hmedatabank.com to learn more.



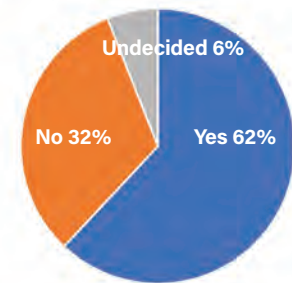
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Most viewed stories in March

1. AdaptHealth sits 'above high water' in 2021
2. Stakeholders put rule, cut in focus
3. ResMed maximizes awareness, demand
4. Providers push back against cuts by MCOs
5. Poll: COVID precautions push permanent business changes
5. COVID & O2: Manufacturers face significant challenges

HME NEWS POLL

Do you plan to attend any in-person industry events this year?



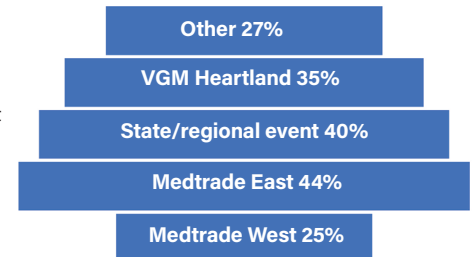
"It's time for us to get back to business as usual and I've missed seeing friends and colleagues. With an increase in vaccination rates, we can feel more at ease with travel."

Victoria Peterson, administrator, Respiratory & Medical Homecare, El Paso, Texas

"I'd rather hold off on attending a trade event until we can do so without masks or social distancing."

-Anonymous

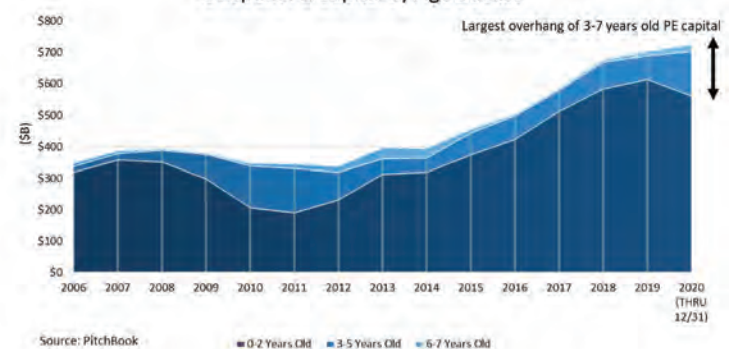
Which events do you plan to attend?



Newspoll based on 66 respondents.

The Braff Group M&A Insider

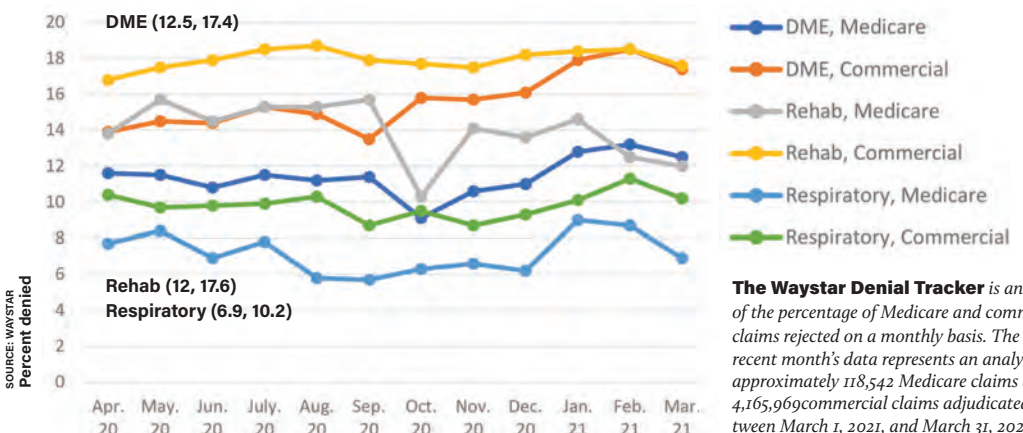
Unspent PE Capital by Age Bucket



This month we take a look at trends in the amount and age of unspent private equity. As we can see, despite record levels of spending, with so much new fundraising activity, the amount of so-called "dry powder" PE has available to invest has soared over the past nine years. Moreover, the amount of that capital that is three to seven years old is the largest it's been since at least 2006. And the older the unspent capital, the greater the pressure on PE firms to get that money working. Combine that with the record levels of newer capital, with so much money chasing deals, and PE has contributed greatly to a spike in valuation over the past two years.

Source: The Braff Group, 412-833-5733.

The Waystar Denial Tracker



The Waystar Denial Tracker is an index of the percentage of Medicare and commercial claims rejected on a monthly basis. The most recent month's data represents an analysis of approximately 118,542 Medicare claims and 4,165,969 commercial claims adjudicated between March 1, 2021, and March 31, 2021. The index is a categorized and weighted analysis of claims filed by Waystar customers.

SOURCE: PDAC

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