

Eli's Hospice Insider

Hospice News: New York Times Throws Shade On Humana's Hospice Acquisitions

Attention from the New York Times is rarely good for Medicare providers. Now the Times has focused on insurer **Humana's** plans to buy two big hospice chains for billions - **Kindred at Home**, owned by publicly traded **Kindred Healthcare**, and for privately held hospice chain **Curo Health Services**.

The danger when a for-profit company is delivering care is "the focus is more on profits than on quality," says physician **Joan Teno**, a professor at the **Oregon Health & Science University**, in the newspaper.

Both Kindred and Curo have paid millions to settle Medicare improper billing and kickback charges, the Times says. The newspaper also works its way through the list of recent high-profile hospice fraud cases, including the **Novus Health Services** case in Frisco, Texas, where the owner and other employees are accused of hastening patients' deaths for profit (see related story, p. 61).

"While local nonprofit groups used to provide services, much of the hospice care now available is dominated by companies that may seek higher profits even if that involves enrolling patients who don't need such care, or cutting staff and services to bare levels," the Times claims.

"Analysts say any insurer offering a Medicare Advantage plan would benefit in seeing patients opt for hospice, rather than continue much more costly treatments at the end of life," the newspaper continues.