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March 12, 2021 05:15 AM | 2 HOURS AGO

## Health systems re-examine post-COVID office space needs • Workers say Cicero nursing home never received vaccines • CVS begins vaccinations in Illinois

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Edward-Elmhurst Health's Corporate Center in Winfield

**HEALTH SYSTEMS REEXAMINE OFFICE SPACE NEEDS POST-PANDEMIC:** As companies in all sectors find their employees prefer to keep working from home, health systems are making moves to accommodate the change and unload office space.

Amita Health is trying to unload its office space in Lisle with the largest sublease listing in the Chicago suburbs, [Crain's reported on Wednesday](#). Illinois' largest hospital network said it made the decision after a survey of nonclinical workers "found many based at our Lisle system headquarters preferred working remotely and were able to do so without interruption," a spokeswoman said in a statement.

Health systems across the Chicago area are making similar calculations. Subleasing space could help companies save cash while they recover from a year in which COVID caused patient volume to fall and expenses to increase.

Advocate Aurora Health said it is reassessing its real estate needs, saying it wants to "create more innovative, collaborative and productive workspaces while lowering our costs," according to spokeswoman Brigid Sweeney.

The health system recently vacated some non-headquarter office space in both Oak Brook and in the Milwaukee area when leases concluded at the end of 2020, she said in the statement. Sweeney said when Advocate Aurora reopens its headquarters in Downers Grove and Milwaukee, it plans to implement a "hybrid approach that combines remote work with office hoteling."

"These decisions are not an indication of downsizing teams, but rather of our ability to reorganize to create a more engaging and collaborative work environment," she said. "COVID-19 has taught us that many team members can effectively work remotely – and enjoy doing so."

Edward-Elmhurst Health is also re-evaluating office space needs at its Warrenville Corporate Center, with the expectation of repurposing some space for other uses, said spokesman Keith Hartenberger.

"During COVID-19, we've learned that many employees can work effectively from home and remote locations," he said. "Some of our work force will continue to do so as we move out of and past the pandemic. Those decisions are being made based on the needs of each department."

Edward-Elmhurst Health has leased about 188,000 square feet in Warrenville since 2019 and had about 1,000 employees working in the corporate headquarters before the pandemic hit.

### **UNION SAYS CICERO NURSING HOME HASN'T OFFERED ANY**

**VACCINATIONS:** Management at City View Multicare Center in Cicero missed the deadline to join the federal long term care vaccination program meaning no vaccinations of residents or staff have taken place, according to SEIU Healthcare Illinois workers at a press conference Thursday.

The nursing home has had 254 cases and 15 deaths since the pandemic began, said union executive vice president Erica Bland-Burosinmi. Last May, the facility underwent a court-ordered inspection after it was sued by the town of Cicero for allegedly not following health guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

SEIU Healthcare members went on strike against the nursing home and its owners Infinity Health in November. Shantonia Jackson, a manager at the facility, said that the deadline was missed to join the federal vaccination program because of the strike and changes in management at the facility.

The Illinois Department of Health, in an emailed statement, said that a Cook County Department of Public Health vaccine provider will begin providing vaccinations at City View this weekend. The IDPH statement said that about 88 Illinois long-term care facilities did not enlist in the federal Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program when first offered the opportunity.

"IDPH immediately contacted local health departments to let them know and to ask those local health departments to offer those facilities assistance as soon as possible," the statement said. "IDPH sent notification to CCDPH in December and again in February" about nursing homes that had not signed up.

**CVS BEGINS PHARMACY VACCINATIONS IN ILLINOIS:** CVS Pharmacy will begin administering COVID-19 vaccines at select stores in Illinois on Sunday.

The shots will be available at seven CVS locations in six counties, with a focus on underserved communities, a spokesman said. Two locations are in Cook County, in Flossmoor and Olympia Fields.

Appointments are expected to be available for online booking starting Saturday. The appointments will mark one of the first opportunities for Illinois residents to walk into a CVS to get a vaccine.

The pharmacy participated in a program to vaccinate residents and workers at long-term care facilities in the state over the past two months, and made a limited number of leftover doses from that program available at four CVS locations downstate. But the shots it plans to give out starting Sunday will be the beginning of a broader vaccine distribution at the chain.

CVS will receive doses through the Federal Retail Pharmacy Program, in which the federal government distributes shots directly to pharmacies. CVS has not disclosed how many doses will be coming to Illinois. Walgreens has been giving out shots through this program at Illinois and Chicago pharmacies since last month. —*Ally Marotti*

**NORTHWESTERN DEVELOPS DRUG THAT CAN KILL BRAIN TUMOR CELLS:** Northwestern scientists have developed a drug they say can kill tumor cells in patients with glioblastoma, a deadly form of brain cancer.

It is the first time a nanotherapeutic has been shown to cross the blood-brain barrier when given through intravenous infusion, according to a statement from Northwestern Medicine. The drug alters the genetic machinery of a tumor to cause cell death, the statement said.

"We showed the drug, NU-0129, even at very small doses, causes tumor cells to undergo what's called apoptosis or programmed cell death," lead investigator Dr. Priya Kumthekar, an associate professor of neurology at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine and a Northwestern Medicine physician said in the statement. "It's a remarkable finding in humans that confirms what we had previously seen in our animal studies."

The Northwestern Medicine study was published in [Science Translational Medicine](#). The phase 0 study was conducted with eight individuals who had recurrent glioblastoma at the Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center of Northwestern University.

### **WHAT PROVIDERS AND INSURERS CAN EXPECT FROM BIDEN'S COVID RELIEF PLAN:**

Health groups lauded the \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill signed into law by President Biden Thursday, which contains several provisions likely to benefit healthcare providers and insurers.

The stimulus package represents one of the single largest investments in community health centers in our nation's history, which will "equip health centers to continue to respond to the pandemic and keep highly impacted communities safe," according to a statement from the Illinois Primary Health Care Association.

The package appears to be a major win for the health insurance industry, with billions of dollars in subsidies to help laid-off workers keep their coverage. Meanwhile, hospitals were denied most of the additional relief they requested to deal with the pandemic's financial pressures.

It's also the biggest expansion of the Affordable Care Act in years. Eligibility criteria for ACA subsidies has been expanded to include people with incomes above 400% of the federal poverty level. It will also increase the size of subsidies for low-income people. [Read more on what else is in the bill from Modern Healthcare](#).

**STATE SENDING MORE VACCINES TO NINE CRITICAL ACCESS HOSPITALS:** Nine critical access hospitals have qualified to receive more vaccines from the federal government under a pilot program that began earlier this month, Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Public Health said in a statement Thursday.

The hospitals were selected as part of the Safety Net Direct Vaccine Allocation Pilot program's second phase, which is targeting rural communities. The nine facilities will receive a combined total of 6,000 doses per week from the state in addition to existing allocations.

**MILWAUKEE COMMUNITY REFERRAL SERVICE TAPS NOWPOW TECH: IMPACT,** Southeastern Wisconsin's 211 information and referral service provider, will use Chicago-based NowPow's technology to make higher quality health care referrals to residents in a way that improves health equity and outcomes.

Participating health care and social service organizations will be able to share, coordinate and track referrals in real-time using NowPow's community referral platform. Health care providers participating in the program include Advocate Aurora Health, Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin health network, Children's Wisconsin and Sixteenth Street Community Health Centers.

"This collaborative partnership of agencies makes it possible to connect people to the resources they need – like food, safe housing, transportation and mental health services – early and effectively," said John Hyatt, IMPACT President and CEO.

Last month, NowPow partnered with Arizona's health information exchange Health Current and that state's 211 network to provide similar services to address social determinants of health needs in the state.

**SURVEY OUTLINES HEALTH CARE'S DATA NEEDS:** A [survey by Chicago-based TransUnion Healthcare](#) found only 37 percent of payers and 58 percent of providers are very confident that their member/patient demographics are correct.

A majority of both providers (63 percent) and payers (53 percent) also ranked improving efficiency in their top data priorities.

"Accurate and reliable data can make all the difference for providers, payers and patients, and the intricacies of data are both an opportunity and a challenge for the industry as highlighted by our latest survey findings," James Bohnsack, Senior Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer of TransUnion Healthcare said in the statement.

## PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

- **Shara Cohen** was named chief executive officer of caregiver support company Carallel on March 1, the Lake Forest-based company said. Cohen most recently serviced as vice president of customer experience for Wolters Kluwer Health and Emmi Solutions. Carallel co-founder **Hillary Ebach**, previously CEO, now serves as chief operating officer.

- **Elizabeth Zamora Meraz** has been promoted to counsel at Nixon Peabody. Meraz represents clients in medical device and pharmaceutical cases and real estate litigation.

• **Kevin McCann** has joined late-stage biopharmaceutical company Orphazyme as head of finance and a member of the company's U.S. leadership team. McCann previously worked for Baxter International in Ireland.

## Letter — to the — Editor

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