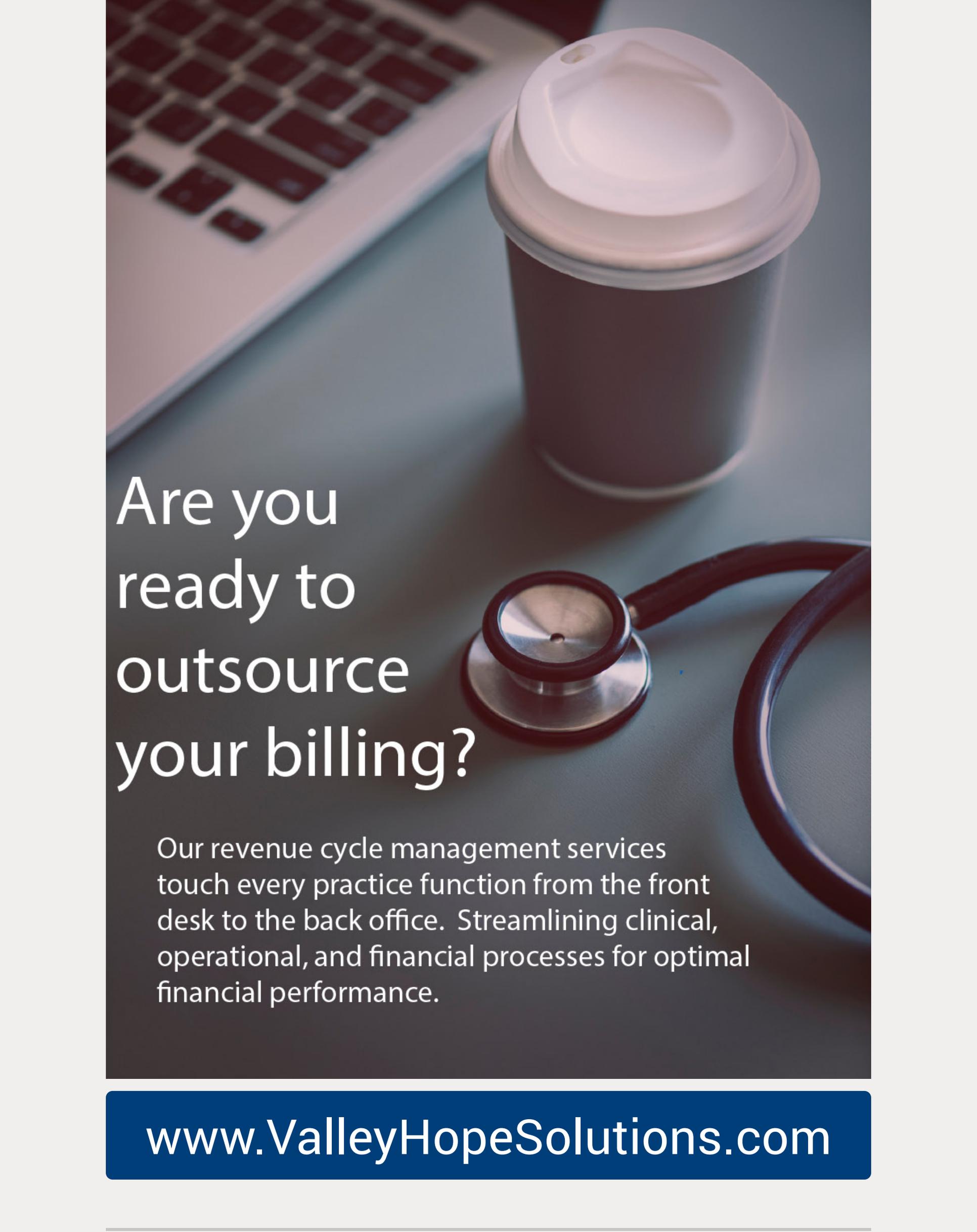




VHS NEWS

Valley Hope Solutions has been providing billing and administrative services for behavioral health issues for more than 50 years, we are even more focused today on keeping our stakeholders informed of leading stories and issues pertaining to our ever-changing industry. We hope this serves to be an informative resource, while providing helpful tips, networking events and educational opportunities. Thank you for your continued support of Valley Hope Solutions - enjoy the journey with us!



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NEWS



LET'S TREAT ADDICTION NOT AS A MORAL FAILING, BUT AS A DISEASE

To stem opioid deaths, our country must do something drastically different — but it isn't legalizing heroin, as Megan McArdle suggested in her Dec. 5 op-ed, "Ready for a heroin Rx?" We must treat addiction the way we do any other disease.

Fentanyl has acted as an accelerant on our nation's smoldering addiction crisis and brought to light the fatal consequences of our failed strategy to treat addiction as a moral failing instead of a disease. Stigma and misunderstanding drive policy and practice instead of compassion and science. Nearly 200 people die each day because we have failed to properly equip our health-care system to provide proven, effective therapies to those with a treatable disease...

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NEUROSCIENTIST THINKS ONE WAY TO FIGHT OPIOID ADDICTION IS TO TACKLE LONELINESS

Feeling lonely? Social isolation isn't just bad for your mood — it can be bad for your health, too. And in a TEDxMidAtlantic talk, Rachel Wurzman says it contributes to opioid addiction — fueling drug use, relapses and overdoses.

Wurzman, a neuroscientist, says she thinks there is a way to make recovery from opioid addiction easier: social connection. That idea is informed by her work with the striatum, a region at the base of the forebrain that helps enable decision-making and is dramatically affected by social connection.

Called the brain's autopilot, the striatum can also trigger compulsive behaviors, such as repeated drug use. Social isolation leaves the striatum in a hypersensitive state, she says, one in which people are more likely to chase a quick reward. The brain can translate loneliness into literal pain, says Wurzman, and that can have disastrous consequences...

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US LIFE EXPECTANCY DROPS FOR 3RD YEAR IN A ROW, FUELED BY RISING SUICIDES, OPIOID DEATHS

The average U.S. life expectancy fell in 2017 as suicide and drug overdose rates continue to rise, according to three government reports released Thursday.

Americans born in 2017 are expected to live 78.6 years, down about 0.1 from the previous year, according to the the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Overall, there were more than 2.8 million U.S. deaths in 2017, or nearly 70,000 more than the previous year, the center said.

"Life expectancy gives us a snapshot of the Nation's overall health and these sobering statistics are a wake-up call that we are losing too many Americans, too early and too often, to conditions that are preventable," CDC Director Robert Redfield said in a statement. "[W]e must all work together to reverse this trend and help ensure that all Americans live longer and healthier lives."...

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OPIOIDS ARE IN THE SPOTLIGHT. BUT METH HOSPITALIZATIONS ARE SURGING

The number of people hospitalized because of amphetamine use is skyrocketing in the United States, but the resurgence of the drug largely has been overshadowed by the nation's intense focus on opioids.

Amphetamine-related hospitalizations jumped by about 245% from 2008 to 2015, according to a recent study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. That dwarfs the rise in hospitalizations from other drugs, such as opioids, which were up by about 46%. The most significant increases were in Western states.

The surge in hospitalizations and deaths due to amphetamines "is just totally off the radar," said Jane Maxwell, an addiction researcher. "Nobody is paying attention."...

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Valley Hope Solutions' mission is to help with the quality of care for patients seeking mental and behavioral health treatment, by providing billing and support services led by industry experts, so healthcare providers can focus on the most important element of recovery: the patients.

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