

# 'Overwhelming' safety issues reported at North Texas nursing homes run by bankrupt company

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Remarkable Healthcare of Fort Worth is experiencing a staffing crisis and is affecting the quality of care they can supply to the patients. The nursing home's parent company, which operates four nursing homes in North Texas, filed for bankruptcy March 20. Chris Torres [ctorres@star-telegram.com](mailto:ctorres@star-telegram.com)

Four North Texas nursing homes have "overwhelming" safety and quality issues as their parent company navigates bankruptcy proceedings, according to a report from an independent patient care ombudsman.

The four nursing homes are all operated by Remarkable Healthcare, a company that is owned and managed by Laurie Beth and Jon McPike of Southlake. Remarkable filed for bankruptcy in March, the company's third bankruptcy filing in a little more than six years.

As part of the bankruptcy proceedings, the court appointed an independent ombudsman to review patient safety and care at each of the facilities. The ombudsman, Thomas Mackey, concluded that the “safety and quality of care issues are significant and overwhelming in each facility.” Some issues, he wrote in his report, stemmed from the bankruptcy, but others “are from long-term mismanagement/neglect at the corporate level.”

At the Dallas nursing home, there are no blood pressure machines, forcing nurses to bring personal blood pressure cuffs to the facility. At the Fort Worth location, the fire alarms and sprinklers were not functional for a full year, Mackey wrote in his report, which was filed with the court Monday. Once, the kitchen was closed, and staff used their own money to leave the nursing home and buy breakfast for patients.

Jon McPike did not respond to voice or text messages asking for comment.

The issues compound the existing problems at the small chain’s most troubled facility, Remarkable Healthcare of Fort Worth, at 6649 N. Riverside Drive. The nursing home, which was previously home to 87 residents, has been repeatedly found in violation of health and safety standards, the Star-Telegram previously reported.

But since the facility’s parent company filed for bankruptcy March 20, residents and staff have faced additional turmoil. The home was named a special focus facility last year, a designation reserved for U.S. nursing homes with the most serious and long-standing issues. On April 3, the federal government took the final and most significant step to address an unsafe nursing home: It ended its provider agreement with the facility, meaning that it would no longer pay for the care of residents with Medicare or Medicaid health insurance.

Such a step is typically a “kiss of death” for a skilled nursing facility, said Annie Rhodes, an assistant professor at Virginia Commonwealth University who researches nursing homes like Remarkable. Almost two-thirds of nursing home patients have Medicaid health insurance as the primary payer for their care, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation, meaning that without Medicaid reimbursement, a nursing home loses the majority of its income.

About a week after the government’s decision, the nursing home’s original owners, the McPikes, announced the nursing home would close, according to resident Nona Taggart. Taggart said she and the other 86 people living there were told to find new places to live by April 18.

But the next week, residents got a different message: As part of the bankruptcy proceedings, the home had a new owner, Pure Health, that would keep it open, residents were told.

The problem, however, was that the new owner was still not certified as a provider by the federal government, meaning it had limited ways to make money until the months-long certification process was complete.

The message changed once again on Monday, Taggart said, when the remaining 27 residents were told again that the home would close and they would need to find new homes by the end of the week.

Jennifer Ruffcorn, a spokesperson for the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, said in a statement Wednesday that health and human services representatives were meeting with Remarkable employees to make sure the remaining residents find safe homes.

“It is our understanding that the facility plans to close by the end of the week,” Ruffcorn wrote.

The conflicting information and the short time frame residents have to pack up their belongings and move has made this closure particularly painful, said Patty Ducayet, the state’s long-term care ombudsman.

“The timeframe was compressed because of decisions the facility made and care they failed to provide,” Ducayet said. “I hold them responsible for that.”

Remarkable Healthcare was notified on April 3 that its contract with the federal government would end. Residents said they were not informed of management’s decision to close the facility until a week later, on April 10.

Ducayet’s office is responsible for listening to the concerns of residents of nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Local ombudsmen have been onsite at Remarkable to help residents decide what they want to do next.

Taggart, who lived at Remarkable for more than seven years, said she was well aware of the home’s safety issues, but that she had come to consider her neighbors at the home and the staff who worked there her family.

“Its terrible that we don’t have a regulatory system that can correct quality issues to prevent residents from, for all intents and purposes, being forcibly evicted from their home,” Rhodes said.

The final residents of Remarkable Healthcare are packing their things at the same time as the Biden administration finalized a major requirement for nursing home care, issuing new staffing rules for nursing homes that will require most homes to provide an average of at least 3.48 hours of daily care per resident.

Although the new rules are the most significant change to federal staffing requirements in decades, they still don’t go far enough, Rhodes said. The best evidence, she said, points to 4.1 hours of daily care per resident.

“It’s a step forward, but still so far behind where we need to be,” she said.

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