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# Why Travel to Colombia?

By **Jerold E. Rothkoff, Esq.**

A study published on June 19, 2024 in *The New England Journal of Medicine* reported that 27 people from an extended Colombian family who carried a genetic variant called “Christchurch” developed Alzheimer’s disease several years later than expected. The findings build on early research in 2019 from a unique family predisposed to pass on the disease. The researchers found that a woman who had the same genetic trait delayed the onset of Alzheimer’s by about three decades. Scientists believe the evidence could be used to develop an Alzheimer’s drug or medication that replicates the protective effects of the Christchurch genetic variant.

The research was isolated to South America where the participants worked with a rare set of data. More than 1,000 members of an extended family in Colombia carry a genetic mutation that puts them at near certain risk of developing early-onset Alzheimer’s disease. The symptoms usually begin when the relatives are in their mid-40s. The mutation carriers are part of an extended family of about 6,000 people who live in and around Medellín, Colombia. In the 1980s, a University of Antioquia neurologist, Francisco Lopera, discovered the family had been afflicted with this inherited mutation, passed from generation

to generation, for decades. Using advances in genetic testing, doctors identified the inherited mutation that triggered early-onset Alzheimer’s in these family members.

Three months prior to the study being published, in March 2024, my law partner, Bryan Adler and I traveled to South America for a weeklong trip to Colombia as part of an elder law delegation from the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (NAELA)



*Bryan Adler, Dr. Francisco Lopera, and Jerry Rothkoff*

learning about the delivery of legal and social services to older adults in Colombia.

The highlight of the trip was a lunch meeting with the lead researcher of the Colombian family at the center of the above study, Colombi-

an neuroscientist, Dr. Francisco Lopera. For decades, Dr. Lopera, at the University of Antioquia in Medellín, Colombia, has been caring for and following an extended family living outside of Medellín, many of whose members carry a tragically unlucky genetic mutation. Dr. Lopera explained that by their late 20s, people who carry the mutation have brains clogged with the hallmark amyloid plaques that characterize Alzheimer’s disease. People carrying this gene begin to experience the first inklings of cognitive problems around age 44, and by 49, they have full-blown dementia. They typically die in their 60s.

However, a few in this population have

*(Continued inside on page 2)*

# How to Find Current Staffing Information on Nursing Homes

by Jerald E. Rothkoff

For decades, academic research has shown that staffing levels reliably predict the quality of care in nursing homes and that shortages increase the risk of delayed response to daily needs, like toileting and eating, as well as medical emergencies, such as falls and strokes. A pivotal federal study from 20 years ago, when most nursing home residents were younger and healthier than today, suggested a minimum of 4.1 hours per resident each day – more than the new rule.

On April 22, 2024, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) released its final rule on Minimum Staffing Standards for Long-Term Care Facilities and Medicaid Institutional Payment Transparency Reporting. The regulation establishes the first-ever federal minimum staffing levels for nursing homes (NHs) and introduces requirements to enhance facility assessments and state reporting on the percentage of Medicaid payments spent on direct care in institutional settings.

Regulations have long required—and still do—that skilled nursing facilities have enough nurses and aides with the correct training to meet the needs of every resident's care plan. Some people require more care from a registered nurse for complex medical conditions. Others need more assistance from an aide with daily tasks like getting out of bed or eating.

Nursing homes are required to post publicly on their premises information that details their direct resident care

staffing levels. Nursing homes must also report daily staffing levels to the Department of Health. The Department of Health makes this information available to the public on a quarterly basis.

**How do you find current staffing information if you are exploring options for nursing home care for a loved one or want to know staffing levels at your loved one's nursing home?**

**Follow these steps to find nursing home staffing levels:**

1. Go to [medicare.gov/care-compare](https://www.medicare.gov/care-compare)
2. On the sidebar, click “Nursing Homes Including Rehab Services.”
3. Enter your state and the name of your facility in the search boxes and click “Search.”
4. Below the overall rating, you'll see 3 categories: Health Inspections, Staffing, and Quality Measures. Click “View Staffing Information.”
5. Scroll down to see the nursing hours per resident per day.

Please note staffing levels are one quality measure of a nursing home. It is also important to visit any potential nursing home for your loved one and speak with residents and their family about their experience.

Please feel free to visit our website, [www.rothkofflaw.com](http://www.rothkofflaw.com), for more resources on choosing a quality long-term care community for your loved one.

## Why Travel to Colombia? (Continued from front page)

defied the odds. Scientists discovered a genetic mutation, nicknamed Christchurch, that protected some of them. Although the brains of these individuals were clogged with the characteristic amyloid plaques of Alzheimer's, they were relatively free of the tangles of tau that are also associated with the disease. The goal, according to Dr. Lopera, is to duplicate this protective gene to delay the onset of Alzheimer's Disease by decades. We also learned that Christchurch provided immunity from COVID-19, and there is the potential to apply Christchurch to other diseases, such as ALS. It was an honor

and a privilege to be in the same room with someone who may finally be close to a cure for Alzheimer's disease, with the opportunity to ask this world-renowned researcher questions.

Fellow elder law attorneys have asked Bryan Adler and I why would we travel to Colombia with 15 other elder law attorneys from across the US? What is the benefit for us? For our elder care law practice?

The simple answer is to learn beyond our ability in our local area. Bryan and I knew about the results of the Colombian study three months before the rest of the world. Life is a

never-ending journey of learning. There is always something new to learn, whether it is a new skill, a new piece of information, or a new way of looking at things. That is the same reason I have also traveled on similar professional delegations to Israel, the Netherlands, and Portugal.

So, why travel 2,500 miles to Colombia? Because that is where a world-renowned neurologist named Dr. Francisco Lopera lives and works. As long as we have the ability to do so, we will continue to seek out new opportunities on our never-ending journey of learning.

## Welcome Sharon Major to the Rothkoff Team

We are excited to welcome Sharon Major to Rothkoff Law Group as our new Elder Care Coordinator. Sharon's dedication to elder care is evident in her nearly 20 years of experience. With degrees from Ursinus College and Harcum College, and a license as a Physical Therapy Assistant, Sharon has gained invaluable knowledge and skills. Her work in hospice, memory care, and skilled nursing has equipped her to provide exceptional support to families.

In doing so, Sharon discovered a profound passion for supporting families through challenging times.



Her empathetic approach has helped families understand their healthcare options while providing the compassion and clarity needed during critical moments.

As an Elder Care Coordinator with Rothkoff Law Group, Sharon will continue her mission to assist seniors and their families in making informed care decisions. Her extensive experience, compassionate nature, and unwavering passion for elder care drive her to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those she serves. Sharon can be reached at [sharon@rothkofflaw.com](mailto:sharon@rothkofflaw.com).

## Rothkoff Law Elder Care Symposium Set to Explore Tech Innovations in Elder Care

On Wednesday, October 16, 2024, Rothkoff Law Group will host our 7th Annual Elder Care Symposium from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm at Live! Casino Hotel in South Philadelphia. There will also be an opportunity to participate in a virtual format. We are thrilled to announce that internationally acclaimed speaker Michael Skaff will deliver the keynote address. As Vice President of Healthcare Technology in North America for Vayyar Imaging Technology, Michael brings a wealth of experience and innovation from his leadership roles at top healthcare organizations, including the Jewish Senior Living Group and the Masons of California. Take advantage of this opportunity to learn from a visionary in elder care.



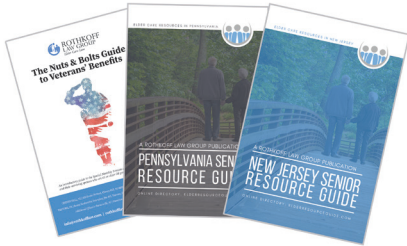
In addition to the live presentations, Symposium attendees can visit the exhibit hall and engage with vendors who specialize in senior care. The agenda, in addition to the keynote address, includes breakout sessions and a panel discussion. Symposium attendees will be eligible for five Continuing Education (CE) credits for in-person attendance or four credits for virtual attendance. For further details and to register, go to [www.rothkoffsymposium.com](http://www.rothkoffsymposium.com).

### THE ROTHKOFF QUARTERLY – Published for clients and friends of ROTHKOFF LAW GROUP

*The success of our firm is a direct reflection of our clients and the referral sources who have supported us. Therefore, we actively welcome your referrals as well as your input regarding the contents of this newsletter. We also welcome comments on the quality of legal services our offices provide.*



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Events Calendar



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## Rothkoff Happenings

Rothkoff Law is proud to announce several awards our attorneys recently received:

- Jerold E. Rothkoff has been named as a **Main Line Top Lawyer** for 2024.
- Jerold E. Rothkoff and Bryan Adler have been named **Super Lawyers** for 2024 for the 9th consecutive year.



*The Rothkoff Law team from both our PA & NJ offices recently got together at the recently opened Saddle Hill Winery in Voorhees, NJ.*

