Hi Folks,

Here are some random thoughts on Health Care Reform. First, my prejudice: I now live in Louisiana and the general consensus is that anything that the Democrats or even the Federal Government hopes to do regarding health care will destroy the country (not that it wasn’t almost destroyed over the last eight years). I have spent most of my life in the Northeast and I must say that adjusting to life in the South is quite an experience.

Back to the point... As of today, there is no definite bill for health care reform. Apparently, the House of Representatives is working to put together several bills, but the Senate is having a much more difficult time. I know that it is important to be in touch with our members of Congress, but it is very discouraging to know that we are competing with the outright lies by those, funded by insurance companies, who say that “Congress would make it mandatory... that every five years, people in Medicare have a required counseling session that will tell them how to end their life sooner.” However, there is absolutely nothing about a “required counseling session.” There is a requirement that Medicare cover the session if you haven’t had it in the past five years, but that does not mean that you are required to take advantage of the coverage. I don’t know about you, but I want to determine, as much as possible, what the end of my life will be like. I do not want to live with a feeding tube and on a respirator, unable to communicate. My husband and I recently worked with a lawyer to determine what our preferences would be in that situation. This is not new; most hospitals ask about living wills upon admission.

We must do something. If we continue in the same manner with insurance companies making health care decisions to enhance their bottom line and taking 20% of each health care dollar for administration (compared to 3% for Medicare), the percentage of the GDP will double in a very short time. Great.

Also, the number of small businesses that are able to offer health care insurance to their employees over the last few years has decreased from somewhere in the 60% range to the mid 30% range. This basically means more and more uninsured Americans.

Furthermore, I am tired of insurance companies practicing medicine without a license. A case in point: recently I had a patient with severe anal itching. She suspected GI Candida, having no vaginal symptoms. A vaginal culture was indeed negative for yeast. Although her insurance company would pay for a course of Diflucan for vaginal yeast, it refused to pay for an extended course to eliminate the yeast from her GI tract. She paid for the medication herself and is now better!

For decades, we have been working hard to fix our broken health care system and to bring some sanity to those who have to choose between food and health care. To date, the House bill will provide quality, affordable, and comprehensive health care. We must get change. Hopefully the final plan will include a public option to encourage the insurance companies to be more competitive. Dare we vote against all those who simply vote no and don’t offer reasonable alternatives? I say YES!! Get them out and replace them with those who will listen to their constituents, not the highly paid lobbyists.

Thanks for your time,

Dr. Bea
AMWA Connections Summer 2009

AMWA Featured Physician: Dr. Mary Guinan, PhD, MD

Story by K.C. Howard
Photos by R. Marsh Starks

There’s something vigorously uncompromising about Dr. Mary Guinan. Guinan is probably one of Nevada’s most powerful women in public health. Her responsibilities — ensuring a massive hepatitis C outbreak never happens again, expanding research capabilities, and persuading Nevadans to lead healthier lives — leave little room for contradictions in her personal life.

The dean of UNLV’s School of Public Health and acting state health officer purposefully parks a seven-minute walk away from the Rod Lee Bigelow Health Sciences Building and climbs 108 stairs every day to her fifth-floor office. She knows that a Starbucks scone has the same amount of transfat as a McDonald’s small fries.

Having battled skin cancer, she advises everyone to be vigilant against Las Vegas’ omnipresent sun. Her office could double as a haberdashery, with its colorful bouquet of wide brimmed hats. At an event at the AIDS Memorial Garden on campus, Guinan directed the 30 attendees to move into a sliver of shade before she’d start her remarks.

She quit smoking after medical school even though she “loved it.” She gained weight and took up jogging — “I was in bad shape. I couldn’t walk a mile without stopping.” — and four years later completed the Boston Marathon.

“I feel like if I didn’t practice what I preach, would anybody pay attention to me?” Guinan says.

Beyond her penchant for healthy living, there are a number of reasons why leading researchers at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Nevada’s legislators, and the victims of unsafe health-care practices do pay attention.

“Quite a reputation

Guinan is passionate about public health, which she describes as population health (not health care for the poor, she’ll pointedly explain). Her complex mission involves working in a network with local, state, and federal health authorities, conducting scientific research, eliminating health gaps between socioeconomic and ethnic groups, and providing quality education for students and the public.

Before Nevada, Guinan’s 20 years at the CDC were marked by breakthroughs. She spent time in rural India, helping to rid the world of smallpox. She became a leading researcher on genital herpes, earning the nickname “Dr. Condom.” In 1981, she was one of the first scientists to identify the epidemic that became known as AIDS. Three years later, she became the first woman to serve as chief scientific advisor at the federal organization.

She came to Nevada in 1998 to be the state health officer, a position that had been vacant for two years. By the time she took the interim deanship at UNLV’s nascent School of Public Health, she had led an extensive study of the Fallon cancer clusters, ruling out a number of potential causes, and played a substantial role in getting the state’s water fluoridated.

“I want my work to have meaning; that’s why I love public health.

“I want my work to have meaning; that’s why I love public health. It has given me an opportunity to work for the communities of the world,” Guinan says.

Now, as permanent dean, she oversees a school with 240 students, more than $7 million in grants, three self-supporting research units, three master’s degree programs, and the school’s first joint doctoral program with the University of Nevada, Reno in the works. “The collaboration with UNR is part of a long-term plan to merge the public health programs at the two universities,” Guinan says. Nevada System of Higher Education, Chancellor Jim Rogers, believes the schools will obtain accreditation faster if they share resources, especially in a state with a tight budget and tremendous need for trained professionals.

Guinan also is acting state health officer, charged with coordinating Nevada’s different health authorities.
Officials asked her to fill the empty position following an outbreak of hepatitis C cases discovered at two Las Vegas medical centers this year. Health investigators have confirmed nine cases of hepatitis C that they believe were caused by health practitioners using unsafe injection practices at the clinics. More than 50,000 residents could have been exposed to blood-borne diseases.

Guinan is leading a team of infectious disease experts to examine the cases and make recommendations to prevent future outbreaks. “I want to make sure our system works, that the public feels safe when they go to any health facility,” Guinan says.

The School of Public Health, meanwhile, is evaluating a program that Nevada could employ to educate patients about what to expect during procedures. Guinan also hopes to require infection control education for every licensed medical practitioner in the state.

“It’s not just Nevada. This is a national problem,” Guinan says. But officials now have the opportunity to overcome the state’s dubious title as the site of the largest hepatitis scare in the country. “We will show some leadership in saying, ‘This is how it’s done. We recognized the problems, and we identified the solutions.’”

Guinan didn’t want to take a leave of absence from the university to step back into the role of state health officer, so university and state administrators opted to split her salary and time. Ron Smith, UNLV vice president of research and graduate studies, says sharing Guinan with Carson City at a time when the state is facing a budget deficit of historic proportions is another way to show how the university contributes to Nevada.

“Just the very fact that she’s there and representing UNLV does a lot of good. She doesn’t have to say a word about us or what we’re missing or what we could use. Her reputation precedes her,” Smith says.
Headquarters Update

After a year and a half of dedicated service, Rebecca Mathis decided pursue alternate career opportunities, moving back to her home town of Richmond, Virginia. We wish Rebecca all the best in the next phase of her career!

AMWA’s Associate Director Position has been filled by Sarah Hagy (shagy@fernley.com), who brings over three years of association management experience and an enthusiasm for women’s issues. In addition to Sarah, AMWA also has the support of Jameela Smith (jsmith@fernley.com) as the Administrative Director; Jameela’s main functions are to handle general member inquiries and needs and support the needs of both Sarah and Lindsay in the everyday operations of AMWA.

Donate to the Legacy Fund Today!

AMWA is now one third on its way to having a permanent lobby exhibit at the Archives & Special Collections on Women in Medicine, the largest collection of material pertaining to the history of women in medicine. Located at Drexel University in Philadelphia, this will be the first public showcase to display AMWA historic documents and photos from the past 95 years. Please consider a donation of any amount to help support AMWA’s legacy. For the month of August, AMWA Secretary, Dr. Jan Werbinski has pledged $1,000 in matching fund donations, so make your donation go even farther. Donations of $2,500 and above will be individually recognized in the lobby’s “Wall of Fame” display.

Flash! Report From The Women’s Health Working Group

After nearly 16 months of meetings, conference calls, reports, investigations, and determination, the AMWA Women’s Health Working Group is ready to launch the Women’s Health Digital Resource Library (WHDRL) on the Medpedia website.

Wendy Taylor, one of the founders of Medpedia, has been working with our group to facilitate construction of the library. The materials we have posted so far can be found on the Medpedia.com website under the AMWA page under “Organizations”. Go to: http://www.medpedia.com/groups/99. Take a quick look at it today, and then determine what materials you can create, or that you may have ready to place onto the site.

Under the Wikipedia concept, any materials can be placed on the site, and you may designate yourself as the lead author. Other MDs or PhDs can make changes to the materials, but you can ask to be notified of those changes if you become a follower of the article. If you disagree with the change, you can make corrections. In the future, we will have a board of peer reviewers, and you may ask that your materials be peer-reviewed.

Medpedia is fast becoming a popular site visited and used by medical students, so this will be a way to share your unique Women’s Health knowledge with a large community of professionals. The articles posted at this point are a set of one page case presentations which were edited by the American College of Women’s Health Physicians to discuss management of Women’s Health Issues through a sex- and gender-specific lens.

AMWA and ACWHP have entered into a partnership which will fund a part-time coordinator for the project for the first year, and the job description for this position follows:

**AMWA/ACWHP Joint Venture: Web-Based Women’s Health Digital Resource Library Project**

SEEKING: Innovative, outgoing, friendly and progressive person with some online publishing and Internet community experience to coordinate, organize, direct, and manage a Web-based Women’s Health Resource Library (WHDRL) which will inform the medical community in evidence-based, high quality, gender-specific care of women.
For many years, the American Medical Women’s Association and the American College of Women’s Health Physicians have been working to produce gender specific teaching and learning resources and Women’s Health curricula, and they have now formed a partnership with www.Medpedia.com with the objective of placing these materials on the Web and making them available to all in the medical community who have an interest in translating gender specific research to clinical practice. All interested teachers, students, and clinicians will be invited to donate to appropriate resources which they have created or discovered.

We are looking for a responsible and deeply committed “people-person” to work with the Medpedia editors and volunteer editors to manage and grow the project.

Responsibilities include:

1. Finding and recruiting potential writers, educators, and editors who will contribute to the project by identifying, writing, editing, or donating materials to be posted on the digital library.
2. Coaching those volunteers and making their contributions simple to post and use.
3. Working closely with the Medpedia staff to organize and place these materials on the site.
4. Willing to travel occasionally to inform schools and educators of the project and facilitate its growth and use.
5. Strong writing and communication skills are a must; some editing skills required.

We envision that this will be a ½ time position for one year, with continuation contingent upon funding. The coordinator will be hired as an independent contractor, working off-site with minimal supervision.

To apply or make inquiries, please contact:
Ms. Sarah Hagy, Associate Director
American Medical Women’s Association
associatedirector@amwa-doc.org

AMWA Student Member Updates

AMWA On the Hill
By Dani Barnes & Siatta Dunbar, AMWA Student Advocacy Co-Chairs

On June 11th and 12th, over 30 physicians and four medical students took part in “Conversations on The Hill,” a physician and medical student advocacy day, co-sponsored by AMWA and PRCH (Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health). The group advocated for a public health plan, the inclusion of comprehensive reproductive health services, and the maintenance of Medicaid and Title 10 funding.

Only two days prior to the visit, the Senate had dropped one health reform bill and the House was expected to draft and drop bills the following week. At such a time of flux, this was an exciting time to be on Capitol Hill discussing health reform! “The event was very exciting because we were not only able to witness, but were actively a part of shaping the upcoming health reform,” said Siatta Dunbar, AMWA Student Advocacy Co-Chairperson.

From the moment the group arrived in Washington, D.C., the education and empowerment began as the participants were taught the tools and skills necessary to meet and speak confidently with congressmen and women about health reform. Divided into regions, the groups were briefed on the positions of the legislators and roll-played with PRCH staff to prepare for an exciting day on Capitol Hill. The next morning, the group walked to the Hill to advocate for quality, accessible health care for all and for the inclusion of reproductive health care in the upcoming health legislation. By the conclusion of the day, a total of 47 legislative offices had been visited, including the offices of members of the five committees in the House and Senate responsible for drafting the upcoming health care reform bill!
All involved were empowered and ready for the next visit to the Hill. AMWA Student Advocacy Co-Chairs Dani Barnes and Siatta Dunbar encourage all AMWA members interested in advocacy or want to learn more about the process to email AMWAStudentAdvocacy@Gmail.com for more information.

It will take all of us to accomplish meaningful health care reform that increases access and provides for quality, comprehensive medical care for all!

**Want To Get More Involved In Health Advocacy?**

Don’t feel empowered or are intimidated by the process? Send us an email at AMWAStudentAdvocacy@gmail.com and get in the loop. Do not stay silent on this issue; get involved, speak up, and advocate together for a working health care system that protects the health of our grandmothers, mothers, sisters, friends, and patients! These are defining moments in history, when real change and reform are possible, now is that time. Together, let us re-write Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr’s quote to be sure that the voices of the good people are heard!

“History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the strident clamor of the bad people but the appalling silence of the good people”.

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

**Advocacy Day 2010**

Make your voices heard in health reform and other legislative matters. Join us Thursday March 26, 2010 for Advocacy Day immediately before the Women’s Health Congress/ 95th year Anniversary AMWA Meeting. There will be a panel discussion in the morning and we will meet with our Legislators and/or their Heath Legislative Assistants in the afternoon. If you are interested please RSVP to LWaters MD@yahoo.com.

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A Note From:
A.T. Still University-Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine

Dear AMWA,

Thank you for giving A.T. Still University-Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine the opportunity to present AMWA Glasgow-Rubin Awards. We enjoy presenting this award every year at our Awards Banquet and each year the recipient is surprised to receive such excellent recognition. Please enjoy the enclosed photo of the recipient and presenter.

Cordially,
Wendy Pinkerton, B.S.
Director of Student Administration Services
Hill Visit & AWHS

National Physicians’ Alliance Hill Visit to Deliver Prescriptions for Health Care
Omega C. Logan Silva, MD, MACP

On Wednesday, July 15, 2009, a group visited the Hill on behalf of the National Physicians’ Alliance to which AMWA belongs. AMWA’s name appeared on the Alliance cover letter.

The following people attended:

Jamie Moran, MD, MPH
Hospitalist, Shady Grove Hospital, NPA member
Krishnan Narasimhan, MD
Assistant Professor, Howard University, NPA
Fareen Qurashi
AMSA medical student
Omega C. Logan Silva, MD, MACP
Past President, AMWA
Juanita Smith, MD
Hospitalist, Shady Grove Hospital, NPA
Sanjeev Sriram, MD
Harvard Fellow, NPA
Pauline Titus-Dillon, MD, MACP
former Sen. Assoc. Dean, Howard University College of Medicine, AMWA member
Aileen Watchko
NPA Staff

We appeared in our white coats receiving attention from a reporter from the Washington Times as we assembled at the entrance to the Dirksen Senate Office Building. The prescriptions and letters from constituents were delivered in folders with information about the NPA with appropriate comments to staff to please support President Obama’s health reform plan and the public health option to the following Senators:

Lamar Alexander, TN
Evan Bayh, IN
Robert Bennett, UT
Christopher Bond, MO
Richard Burr, NC
Roland Burris, IL
Maria Cantwell, WA
Robert Casey, PA
Susan Collins, ME
Kay Hagan, NC
John Kerry, MA
Patrick Leahy, VT
Carl Levin, MI
Blanche Lincoln, AR
Edward Kennedy, MA
Mel Martinez, FL
John McCain, AR
Jeff Merkley, OR
Patty Murray, WA
Mark Pryor, AR
Bernard Sanders, VT
Olympia Snowe, ME
James Webb, VA
Mark Warner, VA

Many of the staff knew their Senator’s stand on the issue and some revealed that the Senator had not taken a public stance as yet. We commented that we hoped the letters and prescriptions from the Senator’s constituents would positively influence the final vote of those undecided and coerce those against the plan to support the plan.

Senator Blanche Lincoln who was just leaving as we approached returned to greet us and mentioned that she was late for a committee meeting on the plan which she supports.

Since we did not have time to deliver all the packets, Ms. Watchko and the AMSA members delivered the remainder on the House side the next day.

AWHS Update - Ashako Kiran Child Care Center, Changing Life in Daldale, One Student at a Time
By Emmanuelle Gounot

The Ashako Kiran Child Care Center now hosts 77 children from nursery level through first grade. What a joy to see all the students arrive in the morning with their school uniforms! Prior to the establishment of the kindergarten, the children of Daldale did not have a chance to attend school until first or second grade. As a result, the school has changed the life of the little pupils and their families.

Aside from the necessary intellectual stimulation and the benefits of an early exposure to English, the kindergarten plays a vital role in the development of these students. Many do not benefit from a balanced nutrition at home and are quite ignorant about basic hygiene practices. At the kindergarten, they are fed a meal every day, and they learn to connect cleanliness and health. Daily homework...
assignments, regular testing and an award system teach them the value of hard work. The five teachers’ dedication is noteworthy and, following their example, the bigger children naturally come to assist their younger peers.

Several of the teachers recently received Montessori training and they have hence started to shift to a more practical approach, away from the local habit of learning by heart. They have incorporated more songs and games and they have also added some drawings and posters to illustrate the lessons. The teachers actively seek student participation by asking questions and inviting students to the blackboard to complete exercises with the help of their peers. It will obviously take more time and resources to fully implement the Montessori Method, but this focus on student engagement sets solid foundations for the future academic success of these children.

The students like their school and are quite proud of it. Many arrive early in the morning so they have a chance to play, sing and dance with their friends before classes start. Parents are equally thankful for the opportunity given to their children and they have also shown a high level of support for the school.

**Women & Infants’ Ultrasound Machine Helps Women In Poor Community In Mali, West Africa**

*Susan Hawryluk McDonald, Women & Infants*

Technology that is deemed medically obsolete in this country is still much more advanced than anything available in many Third World nations around the world. Machines like an ultrasound can elevate the quality of care given to impoverished villagers.

Earlier this year, an ultrasound machine donated by Women & Infants Hospital of Rhode Island was installed at a community health clinic in Mali, West Africa. Through the help of a young physician and a Providence-based organization, clinicians in that area were trained and are now using the machine to diagnose and manage high-risk pregnancies.

The Global Alliance to Immunize Against AIDS (GAIA) Vaccine Foundation, founded in 2002 by Dr. Anne DeGroot, associate professor of pediatric infectious disease at The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University, is dedicated to preventing HIV while supporting the development of a globally relevant and accessible HIV vaccine. GAIA’s mission includes providing more advanced care for pregnant women, many of whom are HIV positive and might otherwise transmit the virus to their babies.

Three years ago, Rebecca Gerber, MD, approached Women & Infants’ physicians about donating an ultrasound machine and the necessary probes and attachments for GAIA, after convincing DeGroot that the organization should consider expanding its services to include diagnostic imaging studies.

“It was a wonderful opportunity for Women & Infants to put what we consider to be an outdated machine to good use in a community that lacks adequate care for pregnant women,” notes Tom Hughes, FACHE, director of Diagnostic Imaging at the hospital, about the resulting donation.

With a piece of equipment secured, GAIA started organizing shipment, a task that involved intense fundraising efforts by pre-medical students at the Alpert Medical School and Boston University. In the meantime, Gerber, a 2008 graduate of Alpert specializing in radiology, spent hours with Cindy Botvin, a sonographer with Rhode Island Medical Imaging, to learn how to use the ultrasound machine.

Earlier this year, the ultrasound was shipped and installed at the Hope Center Clinic located in a “periurban slum” in Bamako, Mali, Gerber notes. The clinic provides basic medical services as well as AIDS and tuberculosis treatment. GAIA Vaccine Foundation has been supporting the delivery of health care in Sikoro since 2005. Brown pre-med students traveled to Mali to help with the project and local foundations supported the construction of a new HIV care center in 2008. Earlier this year, GAIA’s Hope Center Clinic became the first “village-based” infirmary to deliver HIV care in Mali. The Hope Center will become a model for Mali’s 750 other clinics, DeGroot says.

“This is an invaluable resource,” Gerber says. “The goal is to screen for high-risk pregnancy in HIV-positive women, but the machine can also be used much more generally as well.

“The ultrasound enables physicians at the clinic to triage challenging cases and send patients to the nearby magnet hospital for further evaluation and obstetric care. This will save the lives of pregnant women who might otherwise die in childbirth,” she adds, noting that complications from pregnancy and childbirth are responsible for one third of the deaths of Malian women aged 15 to 49.

As the village and its chief welcomed the machine as a “great gift,” Gerber, the GAIA director, clinic doctors, engineers, and electricians struggled with electrical conversions. Initially, the machine would drain so much electricity that the service would surge and could shut down to the entire clinic.
It took about a week and a half to figure out how to configure the machine to convert the clinic’s electricity.

“It was thrilling to be there when mothers would see their babies for the first time,” Gerber says.

Now back from Mali, Gerber and GAIA are planning to find more machines for the community. In time, they hope to secure donated portable and stationary ultrasound machines that will afford more flexibility in terms of access to care. Currently, the machines are very expensive.

To learn more about GAIA or to donate, visit the organization’s website at http://www.gaiavaccine.org.

Women & Infants Hospital of Rhode Island, a Care New England hospital, is one of the nation’s leading specialty hospitals for women and newborns. The primary teaching affiliate of The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University for obstetrics, gynecology and newborn pediatrics, Women & Infants is the seventh largest obstetrical service in the country with more than 9,000 deliveries per year. Women & Infants has been designated as a Breast Center of Excellence from the American College of Radiography; a Center for In Vitro Maturation Excellence by SAGE In Vitro Fertilization; and a Neonatal Resource Services Center of Excellence. It is one of the largest and most prestigious research facilities in high risk and normal obstetrics, gynecology and newborn pediatrics in the nation, and is a member of the National Cancer Institute’s Gynecologic Oncology Group. The hospital was named Rhode Island’s Best Place to Work by Providence Business News and a National Center of Excellence in Women’s Health by the federal government. For information about Women & Infants, log on to www.womenandinfants.org, and for the name of a physician on the Women & Infants’ staff, call the Health Line at 1-800-921-9299.

Medelita proudly supports AMWA in its mission to advance women in medicine and improve women’s health. AMWA members receive a 15% discount orders. Medelita will also donate 10% of all member sales directly to the American Medical Women’s Association.

The STAR Doctor Medical Professional Liability Insurance Program for Women in Medicine

The Star Doctor Insurance Program provides Preferred Medical Professional Liability Insurance for Women Physicians. The insurance program is designed for Women Physicians featuring competitive premiums that reflect Women Physician’s preferred loss history since women physicians are sued less. Coverage is available for most specialties in 46 states plus the District of Columbia. (Coverage is currently not available in NY, NM, KS, & WI.)

For more information, please contact: Jodie Cole, Senior Vice President at (800) 695-0219 Ext. 222 or jodiec@woodinsurancegroup.com.

Journal of Women’s Health is expanding its monthly Bulletin Board section to include more information on the following topics. Kindly put JWH@liebertpub.com on your news alerts and/or let us know when there is news or new projects or programs that the women’s health community should be aware of, such as:

- Centers of Excellence activities
- Fellowship announcements
- New women’s health programs
- New funding opportunities
- Special events
- Advocacy activities

If you are an AMWA member, and you are not taking advantage of your FREE online Journal Subscription, email info@amwa-doc.org and we will send you the instructions on how to receive this great membership benefit!

NOW… Doctor’s Digest ON THE IPHONE/IPOD TOUCH!!! iPhone/iPod Touch users can download the Doctor’s Digest “Essential Practice Tip” App from the “Medical” category in the Apple® App Store or from the iTunes store. HCPs receive a new tip downloaded twice per week to their iPhone/iPod Touch. Click here for more info: http://itunes.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/viewArtist?id=300218535

AMWA Member Benefits – Featuring Medelita and Wood Insurance

Medelita – Dedicated Shopping Page for AMWA Members

Medelita continues to make it easy for AMWA members to purchase lab coats and scrubs tailored for female physicians. Check out the new page to easily take advantage of your AMWA discount through Medelita. Be sure to tell your AMWA colleagues of this great member benefit!
Thank you to our AMWA Corporate Partners!

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