Welcome to the Summer 2021 Houston Methodist Hospital Department of Pathology and Genomic Medicine Newsletter: The Laboratory Report. If you have contributions or feedback for upcoming newsletters, please email us.

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Faculty Accomplishments
Renal Pathology Group Recognized Nationally for Kidney International Reports Article

Department members Lillian Gaber, MD, Edward A. Graviss, PhD, MPH, Duc Nguyen, MD, PhD, Luan Truong, MD, PhD, Roberto Barrios, MD, and co-authors have received high-profile recognition for their recent article “Prevalence, Characteristics, and Outcomes of Incidental IgA Glomerular Deposits in Donor Kidneys,” published in Kidney International Reports.

The collaborative product of physicians and scientists affiliated with the Houston Methodist J.C. Walter Jr. Transplant Center—including
members of the Department of Pathology and Genomic Medicine, Department of Surgery, and Department of Medicine—the study is the first in North America to examine the effects of incidental immunoglobulin A (IgA) on kidney donors, both living and deceased, and organ recipients. While the long-term sequelae of incidental IgA deposits remain unknown, the findings of this study suggest that, because IgA deposits may predate clinical kidney disease, transplant centers should consider enhanced follow-up procedures with living donors who demonstrate the presence of IgA on time-zero biopsy. The data did not suggest that IgA deposits compromised the outcome of the transplanted kidney in transplant recipients.

Congratulations, all on this achievement!

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**Department Members Selected for HMAI Awards**

*Arshad Khan, PhD,* and *Jae Ro, MD, PhD,* were each selected for Houston Methodist Academic Institute (HMAI) President’s Awards. Dr. Khan was the recipient of the prestigious Career Cornerstone Award in recognition of his first career NIH R01 grant as a principal investigator (PI). Dr. Ro was the recipient of the inaugural Award for Excellence in Education for his tremendous continued efforts in the education of our Department’s trainees.

Announced at the [HMAI Town Hall](#) on August 25, each award was the culmination of much hard work by our faculty and emblematic of the dedication of Dr. Khan and Dr. Ro to excellence in their respective callings.
The HMAI Career Cornerstone Award provides discretionary funding for first-time PIs to pursue academic endeavors and is active for the duration of its associated NIH grant. Dr. Khan was nominated for the Career Cornerstone Award for his successful R01 application, “Novel Stem Cell Immunotherapy for MDR-Tuberculosis.” In his application, Dr. Khan described a new approach for therapeutic vaccination wherein mesenchymal stem cells may be engineered *ex vivo* and transfused directly into the body as a treatment for multidrug resistant (MDR) *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (MTB).

Of his R01 and the ensuing Career Cornerstone Award, Dr. Khan said:

“In order to succeed in our endeavor to eliminate tuberculosis from the globe by 2050, we have to think beyond antibiotics. Resistance to antibiotics in MTB is increasing at an alarming pace, underscoring the need for the development of new TB prevention and treatment strategies. Mesenchymal stem cell therapy is one promising avenue that we will explore through this NIH-funded project. The award is great news and it means a lot to me and for my career.”

Recognized for “Excellence in Graduate Medical Education Teaching and Mentoring of Trainees in Pathology and Genomic Medicine,” Dr. Ro’s award provides discretionary funding for the pursuit of academic activities. Dr. Ro’s nomination, written by the trainees of our Department, stated:

“His genuine passion for teaching, coupled with his humorous and pleasant personality, attracts multiple trainees, regardless of their levels of knowledge, to attend his daily conference.”

Congratulations, Dr. Khan and Dr. Ro, on your HMAI Awards!
Department Members Receive HMH Graduate Medical Education Awards

An unprecedented number of our Department’s faculty were honored with Graduate Medical Education (GME) Teaching Awards at the 2020–2021 GME Graduation Ceremony.

Held virtually for the second consecutive year because of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, awardees were chosen by HMH trainees for their demonstration of an exceptional facility for and commitment to graduate medical education.

Proud apple recipients include:

Dr. Blythe Gorman

Dr. Jae Ko with apple lapel pin
Our complete list of award-winning faculty for 2020–2021 are:

**Outstanding Faculty Teaching Award Recipients**
Alberto Ayala, MD (Selective Pathology — Surgical Pathology)
Blythe Gorman, MD (Selective Pathology — Surgical Pathology)
Jae Ro, MD, PhD (Selective Pathology — Surgical Pathology)
Mary Schwartz, MD (Anatomic and Clinical Pathology)
Rebecca Yorke, MD (Selective Pathology — Surgical Pathology)

**Exemplary Faculty Teaching Award Recipients**
Jae Ro, MD, PhD (Anatomic and Clinical Pathology)
Ekene Okoye, MD (Breast Gynecologic Pathology)
S. Wesley Long, MD, PhD (Clinical Informatics)
Blythe Gorman, MD (Cytopathology and Surgical Pathology)
Arthur Zieske, MD (Hematopathology)
Jessica Thomas, MD, PhD, MPH (Molecular Genetic Pathology)
Suzanne Z. Powell, MD (Neuropathology)
Megan Ketcham, MD (Selective Pathology)
Luan Truong, MD, PhD (Genitourinary Medical Kidney)
Mary R. Schwartz, MD (Surgical Pathology)

Congratulations, all!
Featured Faculty

Blythe Gorman, MD

Hometown: New Orleans, Louisiana

Education: BS (cum laude) in Biology from Regis University, Denver, Colorado; MD from Louisiana State University (LSU) Health Sciences Center School of Medicine, New Orleans, Louisiana

Current Role: Staff Pathologist and Associate Professor; Associate Director, Cytopathology Fellowship Program; Laboratory Director, BioReference Clinical Laboratory

Fun Facts: Once owned an African dwarf frog named Zeus, who lived to be a very wise ten years old. Also enjoys birdwatching, road trips, and collecting interesting eyewear.

Advice for Trainees: “Make time to take care of yourself, while still taking care of your patients. Having a sense of humor and a good attitude and view to the bright side helps immensely.”

Dr. Gorman joined our Department as a faculty member in July 2011. After earning her MD at the LSU Health Sciences Center School of Medicine where she studied under our own Arthur Zieske, MD, Dr. Gorman went on to complete her combined AP/CP residency at the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) and then fellowships in Surgical Pathology and Cytopathology at Houston Methodist Hospital. Dr. Gorman first recognized her interest in pathology during medical school and searched for rotations in which she could participate. She was accepted to an autopsy rotation at UTMB; following that rotation, Dr. Gorman matched at UTMB for her residency. When Hurricane Ike struck the Texas Gulf Coast in 2008, Dr. Gorman was transferred to HMH for several months of her residency. After experiencing the familial nature of the HMH pathology training programs, Dr. Gorman applied to and completed her fellowships with our Department.
Dr. Gorman has long been interested in art and enjoys working in many media. In addition to her duties as Associate Program Director for the Cytopathology Fellowship and Associate Professor in the Department, Dr. Gorman recently developed a tangible version of the Platonic ideal of a tissue section. Crafted from polymer clay, the model was created with Dr. Mary Schwartz’s advice in mind: that no sample be thicker than a nickel. But how thick, really, is a nickel? (Per the United States Mint, 1.95 mm). After trial and error involving a home pasta machine, Dr. Gorman began to produce her model cassette chips for trainees in the laboratory. Each model is brightly colored and equipped with a jump ring so that it can be easily carried on a badge or set of keys. Dr. Gorman is hopeful that her creation can provide a practical guide for Department members to better fulfill their professional duties and reduce the need for tissue reprocessing.
Houston Methodist Clear Lake Hospital

Medical Director David Alrahwan, MD, reports:

The Houston Methodist Clear Lake Hospital (HMCL) Transfusion Medicine group has begun validation of Softbank Version Live5. While policies have been in place and staff has been trained for neonatal transfusions, the blood bank at HMCL has been experiencing new firsts with multiple neonatal transfusions occurring in early August.

The HMCL Coagulation group participated in coagulation new lot correlation with the entire Houston Methodist system. It was a pleasure to work closely with the other coagulation specialists throughout the system on this laboratory standardization.

HMCL is excited to meet new Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital pathologist Shuhua Ma, MD, PhD, who will be rotating at HMCL.

HMCL had a successful DNV survey the week of July 26th. All 2020 non-conformities were closed and there were zero non-conformities identified for 2021.

The HMCL Laboratory successfully transitioned on-site COVID-19 testing from the Liat analyzer to the Cepheid analyzer the week of August 2.

The Deer Park Emergency Care Center went live with COVID-19 testing on the Liat analyzer the week of July 5.

The HMCL Laboratory went live with specimen barcode scanning on August 24.

HMCL, including the Laboratory, went live with the Checkpoint Temperature Monitoring System on July 1.

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Houston Methodist The Woodlands Hospital

Medical Director Byron Moore, MD, reports:

Laboratory Director Anita Farr retired at the end of June. Laboratory Manager Michelle Soncio has done an excellent job filling in for the role of
Laboratory Director. We are excited to welcome Kye Green as our new Laboratory Director in mid-September.

**Houston Methodist West Hospital**

Medical Director Thu Ngo, MD, is pleased to welcome Anna Moorhead Best, MD, and Pablo Gomez, MD, to Houston Methodist West Hospital. (See "New Faculty," below, to meet Dr. Moorhead Best and Dr. Gomez.)

**Houston Methodist Willowbrook Hospital**

The Houston Methodist Willowbrook Hospital team is pleased to welcome Michael Mikulasovich, DO, as their new Medical Director. (See "New Faculty," below to meet Dr. Mikulasovich.)

**Laboratory News**

**Medical Laboratory Science Program Celebrates Graduation**

Six students graduated from the Houston Methodist Hospital Medical Laboratory Science Program on July 30. Jeremy Hay, Makaela Jones, Chasity Nguyen, Andrea Torres Ramirez, Shelby Stavins and Melodie Vuong successfully took the national examination given by the American Society for Clinical Pathology Board of Certification and are now full-fledged Medical Laboratory Scientists. Jeremy and Chasity will begin their careers in the Core Laboratory and Andrea will begin at the Microbiology Laboratory. Makaela, Shelby, and Melodie will begin their careers in other cities, and we wish them all the best in their next endeavors.

Thank you to our faculty, staff, and administrators for a successful program, and congratulations to all of our graduates!

**Houston Methodist Laboratories Successfully Undergo CAP Inspection**
Congratulations to everyone who participated in the successful biennial College of American Pathologists (CAP) laboratory accreditation inspection. While the inspection presented unique challenges because of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, our Department rose to the occasion. A national team led by Dr. Richard Baltaro of East Carolina University and consisting of ten members, including two CAP staff persons, was present over a three-day period. The inspection covered the HMH Department of Pathology and Genomic Medicine; the HMH HLA and Transplant Immunology Laboratory; Houston Methodist Hospital Kirby Emergency Department Laboratory; Houston Methodist Sugar Land Hospital Laboratory; and Houston Methodist West Hospital Laboratory.

Great work, all!

Devin Blunck Honored with ICARE Award

Microbiology Laboratory Medical Technologist Mr. Devin Blunck, received an ICARE Award and the highly coveted gold badge for his embodiment of the Houston Methodist ICARE values of integrity, compassion, accountability, respect, and excellence. Mr. Blunck was nominated by his peers and recognized as a truly outstanding employee.

Congratulations on this achievement!

Team Spotlight: HMH Laboratory Safety Committee

Safety is of utmost importance at Houston Methodist, and the HMH Laboratory Safety Committee is central to upholding the Houston Methodist commitment to unparalleled safety. Integral to the highly successful recent College of American Pathologists (CAP) inspection of our Department and laboratories, the Laboratory Safety Committee is comprised of 19 safety officers from each HMH laboratory section. HMH Laboratory Safety Committee members Dorothy Akpan, Jona Garcia, Cattareya Farrar, Sanskruti Gaikaiwari, Aisha Mahmoud, Diann
McAlpin, Umadevi Narra, Tessa Owen, Duong Pham, Audrey Ponce de Leon, Aurora Ramirez, Erica Saunders, Robert Scarlett, Ashley Siverly, Trey Stevens, Kasondrah Stoops, Jessica Varisco, Ivonne Vega, and Diedre Williams are tasked with ensuring that each HMH laboratory is completely safe from a variety of standpoints, including regulatory, ergonomic, or emotional and mental well-being. The Committee especially is cognizant of the importance of preventive measures to create a safe environment. Committee members regularly complete safety audits of their assigned spaces to identify ways in which safety lapses might be prevented. During the recently completed CAP visit, inspectors noted zero deficiencies in the labelling of regents in the laboratories and a 42% decrease in overall deficiencies from the last inspection. These achievements would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of the Laboratory Safety Committee.

Great work, all!

**Achievements and Milestones**

Core Laboratory Medical Technologist **Colette Lanier** was recently recognized by HMH administration for eleven years of volunteer work with the Lay Ministry.

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Core Laboratory Medical Technologist **Vanaja Donkena** earned her National Registry of Certified Chemists certification.

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Medical Technologist **Dawn Hurst** celebrated 45 years of employment with Houston Methodist Hospital.

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**Padma Reddy** celebrated 43 years of employment with Houston Methodist Hospital.
Medical Technologist **Ampy Candelario** celebrated 41 years of employment with Houston Methodist Hospital.

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Medical Technologist **Lynne Miller** celebrated 40 years of employment with Houston Methodist Hospital.

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Medical Laboratory Scientist **Cora Lee Straker** announced her retirement following 10 years of service at Houston Methodist Hospital.

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Medical Laboratory Scientist **Marylen Smith** retired following 14 years of service at Houston Methodist Hospital.

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**Trainee News**

**Welcome, Class of 2021–2022 Residents and Fellows!**

- **Anna Garcia, MD**
  - Michigan State University
  - College of Human Medicine
  - PGY1 Resident

- **Leo Montesinos Barona, MD**
  - Universidad Internacional del Ecuador
  - Facultad de Ciencias Medicas y de la Salud
  - PGY1 Resident

- **Haneen Salah, MBBS**
  - Alfaisal University College of Medicine (Saudi Arabia)
  - PGY1 Resident
Neesha Siriwardane, MD  
Louisiana State University Shreveport  
PGY1 Resident

Danice Torman, MD  
Universidad Adventista del Plata  
Facultad de Ciencias de la Salud (Argentina)  
PGY1 Resident

Paloma Monroy-Bosque, MD, PhD  
Houston Methodist Hospital  
Breast-Gynecological Pathology Fellow

Sarrah Lahorewala, PhD  
Augusta University  
Clinical Chemistry Fellow

Gloria Sura, MD  
Louisiana State University  
Cytopathology Fellow

James Doan, DO  
St. Louis University School of Medicine  
Cytopathology Fellow

Zeina Khairy, MD  
Montefiore Medical Center  
Albert Einstein College

Tiffany Sheu, MD  
Houston Methodist Hospital  
Hematopathology Fellow

Jessica Tomsula, MD  
Houston Methodist Hospital  
Hematopathology Fellow
Mohammed Ahmed, MBBS
Baylor College of Medicine
Selective Hematopathology Fellow

Parsa Hodjat, MD
Texas A&M University
Scott & White Program
Molecular Genetic Pathology Fellow

Ashley Holloman, MD
Baylor College of Medicine
Chief Fellow
Neuropathology Fellow

Oluwaseun Ogunbona, MBBS, PhD
Emory University
Neuropathology Fellow

Juanita Duran, MD
University of Arizona
Surgical Pathology Fellow

Chiraag Gangahar, MD
Washington University School of Medicine
BJH-SLCH Consortium
Surgical Pathology Fellow
PGY1 Residents Fete Dr. Ro

Our 2020–2021 PGY1 residents celebrated the end of a successful academic year and presented Dr. Jae Ro with a painting in gratitude for his continued devotion to teaching the next generation of outstanding pathologists.

The painting depicts Dr. Ro in a lab coat teaching four people about an historic Korean landmark. Dr. Daniel Taylor stated that “Not only is this a metaphor for Dr. Ro's daily 1 PM conference in which he teaches us pathology, this image highlights Dr. Ro's role as our mentor beyond pathology and his commitment to teaching in all aspects of life.”

Department Hosts First-Ever Virtual Open Houses
Know someone interested in pathology residency training with our Department? Current residents and faculty will host virtual open houses on September 8 and September 14 where prospective trainees can learn more about the outstanding Graduate Medical Education programs that our Department has to offer. **Registration is open now.** For more information, please contact Chief Residents **Michelle Lin, MD,** or **Jim Hsu, MD, PhD,** and be sure to share the news about this exciting new way to get to know our Department!
Our Department welcomed Anna Moorhead Best, MD, as a staff pathologist at Houston Methodist West Hospital. Dr. Moorhead Best earned her MD in 2010 from the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, Texas. Dr. Moorhead Best completed her AP/CP residency at the Texas A&M Health Science Center Scott & White Memorial Hospital in Temple, Texas, where she also completed fellowships in Surgical Pathology and Cytopathology. Dr. Moorhead Best previously was a pathologist with Delta Pathology, where she was on the medical staff at Lake Charles Memorial Hospital and Laboratory Medical Director in the Lake Charles Christus hospital system.

Dr. Moorhead Best is a native Houstonian, and reports that she is “proud to join the Department and my colleagues at Houston Methodist West, and I look forward to enjoying all that Houston has to offer.”

Our Department welcomed Ziad El-Zaatari, MD, as a staff pathologist at HMH.

Dr. El-Zaatari earned his MD in 2014 from the American University of Beirut, in Beirut, Lebanon. Dr. El-Zaatari completed a one-year research fellowship in pathology at the American University of Beirut before coming to HMH for his AP/CP residency. Dr. El-Zaatari was the inaugural fellow in the newly established Genitourinary and Medical Kidney Pathology fellowship at HMH, after which he also completed a Surgical Pathology fellowship at HMH.

Dr. El-Zaatari has been very involved in the creation and curation of digital content for both the Texas Society of Pathologists and for the HMH Graduate Medical Education social media presence. He is also a member and upcoming Vice-Chair of the College of American Pathologists (CAP) Digital Content Committee.
Dr. El-Zaatari’s interests include teaching, academic pathology, and photography. He is thrilled and honored to join the faculty of the Department.

Our Department welcomed **Pablo Gomez, MD**, as a staff pathologist at Houston Methodist West Hospital.

Dr. Gomez earned his MD in 2003 from the Ponce School of Medicine in Ponce, Puerto Rico. Following an intensive month-long course in neuropathology at Johns Hopkins University, Dr. Gomez completed his AP/CP residency at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School in Dallas, Texas. Dr. Gomez went on to participate in an elective gastrointestinal pathology course at a laboratory in Irving, Texas before completing his Surgical Pathology fellowship at HMH. Dr. Gomez served as a staff pathologist at Houston Methodist Sugar Land Hospital from 2008–2011, after which he joined the Department of Pathology at St. Luke’s Hospital at the Vintage (2011–2015). Dr. Gomez was a staff pathologist at North Cypress Medical Center (2015–2021) before returning to Houston Methodist this summer.

Dr. Gomez reports that he is “very happy to be back with Houston Methodist. This institution has always had a special place in my heart. I look forward to working with everyone and am glad to be part of the team again.”

Our Department welcomed **Shuhua Ma, MD, PhD**, as a staff pathologist at Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital. Dr. Ma earned her MD in 1997 from China Medical University in Shenyang, China. Dr. Ma went on to earn her MSc in Molecular Biology from the Beijing Institute of Radiation Medicine and her PhD in Molecular Biology and Genetics from the University of Guleph in Ontario, Canada. Dr. Ma completed post-doctoral fellowships in Toronto and Vancouver before beginning her AP/CP residency at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina. Dr. Ma finished her Surgical Pathology fellowship at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center and her Cytopathology fellowship at the Duke University School of
Medicine and went on to spend two years in private practice in the Texas Rio Grande Valley before joining our Department this summer.

In addition to her professional interests, Dr. Ma enjoys outdoor activities, traveling, and spending time with her family. She is delighted to join the faculty of the Department.

Our Department welcomed **Michael Mikulasovich, DO**, as Medical Director of Houston Methodist Willowbrook Hospital. Dr. Mikulasovich earned his DO in 2006 from the New York Institute of Technology College of Osteopathic Medicine in Westbury, New York. Dr. Mikulasovich was an AP/CP resident at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City, and served as Chief Resident during his time there. Dr. Mikulasovich completed fellowships in Oncologic Surgical Pathology and Genitourinary Pathology at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. Dr. Mikulasovich spent nine years with the North Cypress Medical Center/HCA Houston North Cypress, including serving as Medical Director for the Outpatient Department (2018–2021) and Medical Director of Pathology and Laboratory Services (2020–2021).

On September 7, our Department will welcome **Debbie Walley, MD**, as a staff pathologist at HMH.

Dr. Walley earned her MD in 2013 from the University of Mississippi Medical Center School of Medicine in Jackson, Mississippi. Dr. Walley completed her AP/CP residency at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, where she also served as Chief Resident. Dr. Walley will complete a fellowship in Molecular Genetic Pathology at HMH, where she served as a Graduate Medical Education Committee Representative.
Welcome, all!

Faculty Appointments

Paul Christensen, MD, received faculty appointments as Assistant Professor of Clinical Pathology and Genomic Medicine (HMAI), Assistant Clinical Member (HMRI), and Assistant Professor of Clinical Pathology and Laboratory Medicine (WCMC). Dr. Christensen joined our Department in July 2020. Dr. Christensen has been deeply involved with our Department’s SARS-CoV-2 response as an informatics specialist, including designing the Houston Methodist COVID-19 Patient Dashboard.

Reka Szigeti, MD, PhD, received faculty appointments as Associate Professor of Clinical Pathology and Genomic Medicine (HMAI) and Associate Clinical Member (HMRI). Dr. Szigeti joined our Department in July 2020. She is a member of the Hematopathology fellowship Clinical Competency Committee, and is intimately involved in the teaching and supervision of residents and fellows in hematopathology.

Congratulations, Dr. Christensen and Dr. Szigeti!

Conferences & Events

AACC Annual Scientific Meeting and Clinical Lab Expo: September 26–30, 2021 in Atlanta, Georgia

**Grand Rounds Schedule**

**September 8, 2021**
Paul Christensen, MD  
Department of Pathology and Genomic Medicine  
Houston Methodist Hospital

**October 5, 2021**
Sanjay Mukhopadhyay, MD  
Department of Pathology  
Cleveland Clinic

**December 7, 2021**
Reka Szigeti, MD, PhD  
Department of Pathology and Genomic Medicine  
Houston Methodist Hospital

**OAD News**

The Office of Academic Development (OAD) of the Department of Pathology and Genomic Medicine is available and fully staffed during the current SARS-CoV-2 pandemic to assist department members with editing manuscripts, grants, posters, presentations, and more. We are available to meet, in person or virtually, to assess how we might assist you. Please contact our general email, pathologyoad@houstonmethodist.org or one of our scientific writers: Sasha Pejerrey at spejerrey@houstonmethodist.org or 713.441.5889; Adrienne Winston at awinston@houstonmethodist.org or 713.441.3395; or Heather McConnell at hmcconnell@houstonmethodist.org or 346.238.4346. There is no charge for the OAD’s services, and no project is too big or too small!

If you need help reducing percent overlap within a document for a specific journal requirement or reviewer feedback, please let us know! We have access to iThenticate and expertise in reducing overlap to whatever percent a particular journal may require.


*The Laboratory Report* is a publication of the Houston Methodist Department of Pathology and Genomic Medicine

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