From the Chair
MEDICC Board of Directors

The historic announcement by Presidents Barack Obama and Raúl Castro to restore diplomatic relations between the US and Cuba is a long awaited and welcome first step towards full rapprochement, which could be fully realized with the end of the US embargo. Forty years ago, when President Jimmy Carter lifted the ban on Americans traveling to Cuba—a ban re-imposed during the Reagan years—it became clear to me as White House health policy advisor that nothing would benefit more from the free exchange of ideas than the health of our two peoples.

This notion, plus our founders’ study documenting the harmful effects of the US embargo on health in Cuba, prompted creation of MEDICC in 1997. Since then, we have worked tirelessly to overcome legal and political hurdles to forge cooperation between the medical and health-promotion communities of the United States and Cuba, and to share Cuba’s impressive health outcomes and approaches with the world. As the door cracks open through diplomatic relations, we now glimpse new and unfolding possibilities for joint learning, research and development leading to more effective health strategies and new treatments for diseases affecting both countries.

In fact, the earliest beneficiaries of better relations could be the American people, if Washington gives the green light. Among unique Cuban pharmaceutical and biotech products proven in trials around the world are a medication that reduces amputations from diabetic foot ulcers; therapeutic vaccines for lung and childhood brain cancers that prolong life and ensure better quality of life; and vaccines for meningitis B and hepatitis B. At the same time, there is no doubt that Cuba’s health system, run on a shoestring, could benefit from US technology.

The moment has come for decisive action from the Administration and Congress to move from the symbolic to the practical—improving the health of ordinary Americans in the process.

We look forward to a new era when cooperation is the rule and not the exception, when the US embargo will be an impediment of the past. We thank each and every one of you for believing in and sustaining such a vision.

Peter G. Bourne MD MA
From MEDICC’s Executive Director

2014 was a momentous year for US-Cuba relations and for MEDICC. In December the dramatic announcement was made of renewed US-Cuba diplomatic relations. This was swiftly followed by easing restrictions on US travel to Cuba and negotiations to reopen embassies in Havana and Washington.

I was honored to be in Cuba when Presidents Obama and Castro made their historic announcements. I will never forget the excitement, disbelief and joy at the news, as Cubans took to the streets to celebrate.

Most importantly for MEDICC, I was in Havana leading a delegation of diabetes experts, patient advocates and bipartisan members of the Congressional Diabetes Caucus on a fact-finding trip. We wanted to see for ourselves Cuban approaches to preventing and treating a disease that has become epidemic in the USA. So, we visited a diabetes care center where we saw patients being treated with Heberprot-P, the Cuban diabetic foot ulcer medication, already used in 26 countries, that has reduced relative risk of amputation by over 70%. This is just one product in Cuba’s biotech industry that could benefit Americans, if the US Treasury Department clears the way for the regulatory process and sales. And the returns on such sales could certainly benefit Cuban health care facilities and professionals.

On another front, MEDICC also sees an urgent need for the US and Cuba to cooperate internationally, working together to mitigate health emergencies and prevent spread of new life-threatening diseases in our own region and elsewhere. High-level coordination between the two countries could stop epidemics in their tracks: witness the response to Ebola. Although Cuba is a developing country, its 256 nurses and doctors became the single largest contingent from any country to respond to WHO’s urgent call. And the US sent vital logistical support to West Africa. But how much more could have been achieved, and sooner, if the two governments had worked hand-in-hand from the start?

Another crucial lesson learned from the Ebola epidemic was the vulnerability of countries with weak healthcare systems and shortages of healthcare workers when faced with preventing and countering epidemics. We see Cuba’s strong healthcare system, built with modest financial resources, as an example for the rest of the developing world.

My first year at the helm of MEDICC was punctuated by events on the world stage and the day-to-day job of expanding our programs and effectiveness. I’m proud of the many program achievements by our dedicated staff, Board and many partners. I look forward to what we can accomplish together in the coming year in this next phase of renewed US-Cuba relations—relations that for MEDICC are just the first step towards effective, urgently needed cooperation in health.

Pierre M. LaRamée PhD
2014 Program Highlights
MEDICC Delivers!

PROMISES: KEPT
MEDICC’s major achievements

2014 was a pivotal year for MEDICC, transitioning leadership to new Executive Director Pierre LaRamée, a dedicated advocate of global health equity and Latin American human rights, who brought to MEDICC over 30 years’ experience in NGO leadership. Under his direction, all programs have expanded and new staff have joined MEDICC’s ranks to accommodate this growth. Among the ways we bridged the US, Cuban, and global health communities and shared the successful outcomes of Cuba’s public health and medical education systems in 2014, MEDICC:

• Catapulted the story of the Latin American Medical School (ELAM) onto the global stage, through co-founder Gail Reed’s TEDMED talk “Where to train the world’s doctors? Cuba.” To date, the video has been viewed over 700,000 times and has been translated into 22 languages.

• Coordinated educational exchanges to Cuba for 152 professionals, participating in 12 programs tailored to each group, including a high-level delegation of Congressional Diabetes Caucus members, medical experts and patient advocates to Cuba to learn more about diabetes care and an innovative therapy that reduces diabetic foot amputations.

• Generated new Institutional Bridges and developed others, brokering a bilateral agreement between the American Public Health Association and the Cuban
Society of Public Health, which envisions joint research and exchange of experience and publications; and furthering work on end-of-life issues between Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and Cuba’s Institute of Neurology and Neurosurgery as well as the relationship between the University of California at San Francisco’s Memory and Aging Center and CNEURO, the Cuban Neurosciences Center.

• Became a prime source for news on Cuba’s role in fighting the Ebola epidemic through press outreach and a new website. www.ebola.medicc.org. Cuba sent 256 nurses and doctors, the largest contingent of healthcare workers from any country. MEDICC staff met these volunteers at the Ebola training facilities at Havana’s Pedro Kouri Tropical Medicine Institute in October, just days before they were dispatched to West Africa. This visit was featured on MEDICC’s blog—“Trading white coats for Ebola protection suits: Cuban volunteers gear up to fight Ebola”. In cooperation with Global Links, MEDICC also launched a special fundraising campaign to secure shipment of medical supplies to the international and Cuban teams. We were pleased to see all the brave Ebola healthcare workers named Time’s Person of the Year 2014.

• Launched new sites in one of our signature programs, Community Partnerships for Health Equity (CPHE), in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Summit County, Ohio; Kern County, South Los Angeles, Del Norte and San Diego; California. We also convened the first national meeting of MEDICC’s CPHE Network of Community Partnerships for Health Equity, with community health leaders and advocates from six cities joined together to share with each other actions taken to improve local health, prompted by insights gleaned from their visits to Cuba.

Cuba: The Scorecard – Outstanding Health Outcomes

• Cuba is among the top 20 countries in progress towards the UN Millennium Development Goals.
• Save the Children ranks Cuba as the #1 country in Latin America to be a mother.
• A woman born in the District of Columbia, USA, has the same life expectancy as a woman born in Matanzas province in central Cuba.
• Cuba has the lowest HIV rate in the Americas and is the first country to be certified by WHO to have stopped mother-to-child HIV and syphilis transmission.
• Doctor-to-patient ratio in Cuba is among the world’s highest; 61% of physicians are women.
• The leading causes of death are the same for the US and Cuba (cancer, heart disease, chronic lower respiratory diseases, stroke, and unintentional injury).

2014 Professional Research & People-to-People Exchanges to Cuba

American Public Health Association (January)
CPHE Kent State and Northeast Ohio Medical University (February)
American Public Health Association (March)
Kent State Cuban Studies (March)
Medical Education (April)
CPHE Bronx, New York (May)
Public Health Communications (September)
CPHE California Endowment: South Los Angeles and San Diego/City Heights (October)
CPHE California Endowment: Del Norte County and Adjacent Tribal Lands, South Kern (October)
Diabetes Congressional Delegation (December)
CHALLENGES: ACCEPTED

MEDICC In the News and MEDICC Review Journal

MEDICC has earned the reputation as the source for credible news and information on Cuban health care, generating interviews in TIME Magazine, International Business Times, CCTV and BBC/Public Radio International, as well as writings by MEDICC staff and Board in The Guardian and The Lancet, among others.

“Beautifully produced and full of valuable work. Fabulous.”
—Dr. Richard Horton, Editor of The Lancet, describing MEDICC Review

Quarterly, MEDICC publishes MEDICC Review, a peer-reviewed journal in English that carries research and commentary primarily from Cuban scientists and health professionals, but also from other authors addressing issues of population health and global health equity. The journal is open-access online and reaches a global readership in over 125 countries. www.medicc.org/mediccreview

MEDICC Review was the first scientific journal to dedicate an entire issue to chronic kidney disease of uncertain causes (CKDu), a global epidemic that has affected thousands of poor farmworkers and their families from Central America to Sri Lanka and Egypt, killing some 20,000 to date. The print edition of Chronic Kidney Disease Hits Agricultural Communities, guest-edited by Dr. Wendy Hoy of Australia, was launched in May in the capital of El Salvador, co-hosted by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and El Salvador’s Minister of Health, an event attended by over 100 health professionals, government authorities and representatives of international agencies. The groundbreaking MEDICC Review issue garnered the most monthly online article-views to date: 47,000.

The journal also published on several additional themes during the year: health over the life span, cancer and genetics.

MEDICC Review Top ten viewed articles

8. Faculty of Health Sciences, Walter Sisulu University: Training Doctors from and for Rural South African Communities (10,842 views) Fall 2008, Vol 10, No 4
10. Cuba’s National Immunization Program (10,526 views) Fall 2007, Vol 9, No 1
MEDICC’s Community Partnerships for Health Equity

MEDICC expanded our Community Partnerships for Health Equity (CPHE) with new sites in California; Summit County, Ohio; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin; supported by new funding from The California Endowment and The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

CPHE brings the best of the Cuban health care experience to underserved communities in the US, whose leaders are committed to improving health outcomes and access. A range of stakeholders from medically underserved US communities participate in multiple one-week trips to Cuba, educational exchanges enabling them to see firsthand Cuba’s emphasis on prevention, primary care and cross-sector collaborations. They meet colleagues, patients and community leaders in visits to neighborhood polyclinics, community mental health centers, maternity homes, senior’s clubs, primary schools and the Latin American Medical School (ELAM).

As a result of insights brought home, CPHE community members from South Los Angeles, CA; Oakland, CA; Albuquerque, NM; and the Bronx, NY, have launched innovations that include health portals in schools, a drive to enroll children in Medicaid, and developing a model for a children’s “health home”.

In 2014, new CPHE groups from Summit County, Ohio; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and four California Endowment Building Healthy Communities sites (Kern County, Del Norte County, San Diego and South Los Angeles) conducted research in Cuba; while existing CPHE sites launched pilot health programs with the help of seed grants. The year ended with the first CPHE National Network meeting in Albuquerque. Participants from Los Angeles, Oakland, Albuquerque, the Bronx, Milwaukee and Summit County met to strengthen their work by sharing ideas and best practices across communities—inspired by a participatory workshop led by Cuban colleague Dr. Raul Gil, professor of Human Development and the founder and director of the Community Mental Health Center in Regla, Cuba.

From our firsthand experience, we can see real benefit in identifying best practices in other countries, including poorer or less-developed ones, and adapting them to improve social determinants of health in underserved communities in the United States—part of our strategy for global learning. The Cuban emphasis on primary care, its integration of public health and health care systems, active engagement of families and communities, and building cross-sector alliances for health, are all key elements in RWJF’s own vision.”

—Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Field Notes: What Cuba Can Teach Us about Building a Culture of Health
LEADERSHIP FOR HEALTH EQUITY: THRIVING

MEDICC’s Support for the Latin American Medical School

Since its founding in 1999, Cuba’s Latin American Medical School (ELAM) has graduated 23,000 doctors, with 10,000 more in the pipeline, making it the world’s largest medical school. Graduates come from 83 countries in the Americas, Africa and Asia; and enrollment has grown to 123 nations. More than half the students are young women. On full scholarship, the students and graduates represent over 100 ethnic groups and include 200 from the USA. Coming from low-income families, these diverse, smart and committed young people pledge to return home to practice in underserved communities.

MEDICC programs aim to speed their way into public service in the United States through the MD Pipeline to Community Service. In 2014, MEDICC awarded 43 Mnisi Fellowships to help students prepare for the US medical licensing exams. Pass rates are excellent among recipients, at 95%. Over the summer, MEDICC placed 30 US ELAM students in 24 clinical sites in 7 states and the District of Columbia, providing the valuable US clinical experience needed for residency placements. US ELAM students in the Bay Area for the summer had a unique opportunity to work in an ultramodern healthcare simulation facility at Samuel Merritt University’s Health Sciences Simulation Center. This opportunity, now in its second year, provides ELAM students the hands-on training they need with state-of-the-art medical equipment and actors portraying medical conditions that they will see in their practice.

We also worked closely with ELAM graduates entering the National Residency Match Program in 2014. Graduates were paired with a mentor in their chosen field and provided with guidance and feedback on interview and application strategies, plus information via a web-based lecture secure to their specific needs. All 12 received invitations to interview with residency programs. Overall, 44 residency programs interviewed ELAM grads this cycle, and 32 residency programs nationwide have thus far matched ELAM graduates.

“For once, if you are poor, female or from an indigenous population, you have a distinct advantage, an ethic that makes this medical school unique.”

–WHO Director Dr. Margaret Chan, on her visit to the Latin American Medical School

Internationally, MEDICC extended its support to Dr. Luther Castillo (ELAM class of 2005) and other graduates who founded the first indigenous hospital in Honduras, located on the Atlantic coast in a region with poor health outcomes and little prior access to health care. Since 2008, over one million free patient visits and hospitalizations have benefited the surrounding Garifuna and other indigenous communities.
POLICIES: CHANGED

MEDICC’s Influence in DC and Havana

MEDICC has served as a bridge between the US and Cuban medical and population health communities, despite the US embargo and travel restrictions. Since 1997, we have helped over 1,500 healthcare providers, medical students, community members, policymakers and educators make connections with Cuban colleagues and see Cuban health care firsthand. *MEDICC Review* brings peer-reviewed, Cuban medical science to a broader English-speaking audience. Lessons learned from Cuban health strategies are contributing to fresh approaches in communities across the United States. And graduates from the Latin American Medical School, assisted by MEDICC, are making a difference to patients and policy, in favor of greater health equity.

Rep. Charles Rangel participated in the MEDICC diabetes delegation and was in Cuba on the day of the historic announcements by Presidents Obama and Castro, where he applauded MEDICC’s role “as a non-political organization that should feel partially responsible [for this opening], since it has been promoting the kind of good relations it takes to have our government do the right thing.”

Yet, as he also pointed out, there is much more to be done: “Today’s actions go a long way towards improving relations between our two countries,” he said, “even though the US embargo has not been removed altogether.”

And removing the embargo altogether is indeed the next step. In 2014, MEDICC convened two sessions in Washington DC with advocates, foundations, congressional aides and national health organizations, to look at how cooperation in health can become a centerpiece of initiatives to do away with this unhealthy policy that has kept ordinary people on both sides of the Florida straits not only apart, but also without the benefit of advances in each country.

In 2015, MEDICC is committed to generating the initiatives and movement to place health squarely on the agenda for US-Cuba cooperation and for lifting the US embargo on the island.

“Where we can advance shared interests, we will — on issues like health, migration, counterterrorism, drug trafficking and disaster response. Indeed, we’ve seen the benefits of cooperation between our countries before. It was a Cuban, Carlos Finlay, who discovered that mosquitoes carry yellow fever; his work helped Walter Reed fight it. Cuba has sent hundreds of health care workers to Africa to fight Ebola, and I believe American and Cuban health care workers should work side by side to stop the spread of this deadly disease.”

—President Barack Obama, announcing a new US-Cuba policy, December 17, 2014
MEDICC Milestones

1997

- MEDICC founded by Peter Bourne, Alfred Brann, C. William Keck, Albert Kuperman, Gail Reed and Michele Frank, as a program of the American Association for World Health (AAWH), based on the study Denial of Food & Medicine: Impact of the US Embargo on Health & Nutrition in Cuba.

1998

- MEDICC, Inc. constituted, receiving IRS status as 501(c)(3) non-profit. Academic Council formed to advise MEDICC, composed of distinguished Cuban and US medical educators, headed on the Cuban side by Dr. José B. Jardines and on the US side by Dr. Peter G. Bourne. First US medical students travel to Cuba for family medicine electives.

1999

- MEDICC creates website at www.medicc.org and MEDICC Review online begins covering Cuban health and medicine, publishing work in English by Cuban health professionals.
- MEDICC begins literature and journal donations for ELAM program, all medical schools and Cuban health care professionals.
- Latin American Medical School (ELAM) founded, with scholarships to students initially in Latin America, and later worldwide, who commit to serving poor communities upon graduation.

2000

- At invitation of Dean Marla Salmon, MEDICC relocates to Emory University School of Nursing, Atlanta.

2001

- First US scholarship students accepted at ELAM, recruited by the Inter-religious Foundation for Community Organizing (IFCO).
- President Jimmy Carter and Rosalynn Carter attend MEDICC reception at the Carter Center, where they meet Chief of the Cuban Interests Section, Dagoberto Rodríguez—first official diplomatic contact in decades. Months later, President Carter visits Cuba.

2002

- International Health Medical Education Consortium (later GHEC and CUGH) conference organized in Cuba with MEDICC.

2003

- Deputy Chief of Havana’s William Soler Pediatric Heart Center presents at the 4th International Pediatric Cardiovascular Symposium in Atlanta, GA, and other Cuban professionals begin travel to USA on MEDICC fellowships.

2004

- By now, 118 US medical, nursing and public health schools offer credit for MEDICC electives in Cuba, permitting some 1500 students and professors to join.
- President Bush curtails student programs in Cuba, and MEDICC shifts to partner with Marazul Charters to offer US health professionals opportunities for research programs in Cuba.

2005

- MEDICC co-produces film ¡SALUD!, with director Connie Field, and launches first Community Partnerships for Health Equity (CPHE) in South Los Angeles, CA.
- MEDICC provides first class of 1500 graduates from ELAM with Backpack Library and launches programs to support US ELAM students.

2006

- ¡SALUD! premiers with remarks by Dr. Paul Farmer at Harvard University, garners endorsements from global health leaders on its site: www.saludthefilm.net
- MEDICC delegation in Havana received by President Fidel Castro.

2007

- ¡SALUD!, wins Council on Foundations Excellence in Film award, Pan African Film Festival’s Audience Choice Award, and American Medical Students Association’s first film prize; is acclaimed as Notable Video of the Year by American Library Association.
- MEDICC awards first Mnisi Fellowships to US ELAM students and graduates to help pass their board exams, named for Dr. Thabo Mnisi, South African physician trained in Cuba.
- MEDICC Review becomes peer-reviewed, quarterly journal with international editorial board.

2008

- MEDICC moves headquarters from Atlanta to Oakland, CA and launches second Community Partnerships for Health Equity there.
- MEDICC journal converts to Open Access—articles free online; senior editor writes OXFAM-published Cuba's HIV Strategy.
- MEDICC supports Honduran ELAM graduates, headed by Dr. Luther Castillo, who lead their communities to build and open first Garifuna hospital to serve this indigenous population.

2009

- MEDICC Review invited as media sponsor of WHO’s Global Forum for Health Research.
- By now, US health professionals have produced 26 publications and 136 conference papers from MEDICC-related travel to Cuba.
MEDICC cited in Amnesty International’s report *The US Embargo Against Cuba.*

In Haiti, MEDICC partners with Global Links and PAHO to assist ELAM graduates in Cuban-led disaster relief contingent, raising $100,000; also partners with Hesperian to add 4th language to MEDICC’s medical glossary for relief teams, including Haitian and other ELAM medical students and graduates.

MEDLINE accepts MEDICC Review and journal publishes joint issue with Global Forum for Health Research. The journal also indexed by Thomson-Reuters, Elsevier, CABI and SciELO.

CPHE Oakland caps with forum to share lessons with 100+ Bay Area community leaders.

MEDICC interviews appear on BBC, CNN, PBS NewsHour.

Third CPHE launched in Albuquerque, NM.

MEDICC Review online tops 20,000 monthly article views from readers in 90+ countries.

At high-level meetings, Salvadoran Minister of Health distributes MEDICC Review article on the country’s chronic renal disease epidemic, leading to PAHO and regional health ministers’ declarations on this Central American health crisis.

MEDICC and Global Links ship containers of $625,000 in medical supplies and equipment to Cuban-trained Haitian and Latin American doctors building sustainable public health services in Haiti.

Navajo Nation’s Surgeon General and Vice President visit Cuba with MEDICC to see health system and assess ELAM for Navajo students.

¡SALUD! has now sold 5,000 DVDs, the film viewed by 100,000+ worldwide in four languages.

Staff and board publish in *American Journal of Public Health* and *Scientific American*; Irish Times; are interviewed by CNN, MSNBC.

Cuba graduates record class of over 11,000 MDs—5,315 Cuban graduates and 5,694 international graduates from 59 countries.

MEDICC receives U.S. Department of Treasury People-to-People travel license for educational exchanges to Cuba, and organizes 13 health professionals’ groups to Cuba in coordination with Havana’s National School of Public Health; a program by now resulting in 51 publications and 227 major conference presentations.

RECUITS a new Executive Director, Dr. Pierre M. LaRamee, to lead MEDICC to the next level in a seamless transition that builds on the legacy of founding CEO Gail Reed.

Provides guidance to unprecedented numbers of US professionals, opinion influencers and policymakers traveling to Cuba to see the island’s health care system—174 in all.

Receives a $5.8 million grant from The Atlantic Philanthropies to enhance cooperation among the US, Cuban and global health communities working towards better health outcomes and equity.


MDipeline to Community Service: MEDICC places a record number of 40 US students from ELAM in 26 clinical sites in 11 states and Washington DC, providing the US clinical experience essential for residency placements.

Fourth CPHE launched in the South Bronx, NY.

Institutional Bridges program supports long-term cooperation between the American Public Health Association and Cuba’s Public Health Society; Johns Hopkins University and Cuba’s Neurology and Neurosurgery Institute; and University of Puerto Rico’s Faculty of Public Health and Cuba’s National School of Public Health.

Co-founder Gail Reed presents TEDMED talk on the Latin American Medical School and its 23,000+ graduates, promoted on the popular TED.com platform, accumulating over 650,000 views.

MEDICC Review publishes special issue Chronic Kidney Disease Hits Agricultural Communities, with the latest research on chronic kidney disease of uncertain causes, bringing international attention to the epidemic. The groundbreaking issue garners the most online monthly article views of MEDICC Review to date: 46,919, after presentation in El Salvador by PAHO and Salvadoran Minister of Health Dr. Maria Isabel Rodriguez.

MEDICC coordinates high-level delegation to Cuba of Congressional Diabetes Caucus members, medical experts and patient advocates to learn more about diabetes prevention, care and an innovative therapy that reduces diabetic foot amputations.

The National CPHE Network is created and expands with new sites in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Summit County, Ohio; and California Endowment sites in Kern County, South Los Angeles, Del Norte and San Diego.

TIME Magazine picks the Ebola Fighters, including the Cuban teams, the largest contingent of healthcare workers from a single country, as Person of the Year.

On December 17, Presidents Barack Obama and Raúl Castro make historic announcements that pave the way for renewal of full diplomatic relations. Some US travel restrictions are relaxed for US citizens to visit Cuba.
MEDIICC earned a spot on the 2014 Top-Rated List from GreatNonprofits, placing it in the top 10% of eligible nonprofits. With 85% of all donations directly benefitting our programs, donors can be sure their contributions are used wisely and effectively.

MEDIICC is grateful for the support of individuals and foundations who share our vision of *Health for All*. In addition to long-term foundation partners The Atlantic Philanthropies, The Christopher Reynolds Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, The Ford Foundation and Kaiser Permanente Foundations, we were pleased to win the confidence of new institutional partners in 2014: The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, The California Endowment, Institute of International Education, Inc., Center for Inter-America Legal Foundation, Bronx-Lebanon Hospital Center, and ESPOIR Haitian-American Organization.

With a careful eye towards managing donor funds responsibly and effectively, we were able to expand programs and add staff, while keeping overhead well within industry standards. The Board’s finance committee, Executive Director and Finance Director monitor budgets and work towards long-term sustainability. MEDIICC also voluntarily submits its financial records to an annual independent audit.
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We thank the following Institutional Funders for their generous support since our founding:

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