

Board of Trustees names Max Nikias as next USC president

C. L. Max Nikias, USC executive vice president and provost, will become the 11th president of USC on Aug. 3. His appointment was announced March 11 by Edward P. Roski Jr., chairman of the USC Board of Trustees.

Nikias will succeed Steven B. Sample, who has led USC since 1991. In November 2009, Sample announced his decision to retire Aug. 2, 2010.

Over the course of his career as a researcher, educator and university administrator, Nikias has earned accolades for his leadership, innovation and fundraising, as well as his ability to build partnerships among varied constituencies.

As President Sample's second-ranking officer since 2005, Nikias is credited with accelerating the university's recent academic momentum, recruiting new leadership, strengthening the academic medical enterprise, helping attract a series of major donations to the institution, creating innovative cross-disciplinary programs, enhancing the university's globalization efforts and increasing support

for students at the undergraduate, graduate and doctoral levels.

Nikias' selection by the Board of Trustees followed a search process that involved an advisory committee of trustees and senior faculty representatives, working with R. William Funk & Associates, one of the nation's premier search consulting firms serving higher education. Between November 2009 and January 2010 the advisory committee met with 15 key USC constituent groups, including students, faculty, alumni leaders, community representatives, staff and various university supporters and friends. After reviewing approximately 75 candidates, the committee interviewed seven finalists, all of whom were sitting presidents or provosts at major universities.

"It is a testament to Max Nikias' abilities that, from such an impressive group of educators, he was unanimously recommended by the advisory committee," Roski said. "During his 19 years as a faculty member and



C. L. Max Nikias speaks on the Health Sciences Campus during a 2009 event commemorating the acquisition of the USC Norris Cancer Hospital and USC University Hospital.

Veronica Jauriqui

'I'm delighted to have a successor whose keen vision and energy will keep the university moving ahead at a rapid pace. USC will be in excellent hands with Max as president.'

—USC President Steven B. Sample

administrator at USC, he has provided distinguished service to the university in a variety of roles. He is a remarkable and inspiring leader, a brilliant scholar, and the best possible person to lead our university forward."

President Sample praised the appointment: "I have long believed that Max Nikias is one of the country's most talented provosts. I'm delighted to have a successor whose keen vision and energy will keep the university moving

ahead at a rapid pace. USC will be in excellent hands with Max as president."

Vaughn A. Starnes, chairman of the Department of Surgery at the Keck School of Medicine and a member of the search committee, added, "Max Nikias has proven to be an able administrator, a visionary leader and a key factor in the success that the university has achieved in recent years. He has excelled in his service to the university as provost

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Web site launched for The Nurses of USC

By Carol Matthieu

With vigorous nurse recruitment efforts under way for USC University Hospital and USC Norris Cancer Hospital, an important new Web site has been added to the recruitment tool kit.

The NursesofUSC.com site, launched Feb. 24, is a new portal for prospective USC nurses, whether they are experienced veterans or recent graduates.

The site provides potential recruits a comprehensive overview of all the benefits, specialties, programs, professional development and career opportunities available to nurses at USC.

"While the primary goal of the site is to recruit new nurses, it also serves as a tool to let everyone know who we are and what fantastic work we do at USC caring for our patients and families," said Nursing Executive Ellen Whalen.

Highlights of the site include a special recruitment video featuring USC nurses discussing the rewards and benefits of being a Trojan, news and events of interest to current and prospective nurses, nurse testimonials throughout the site and a link to the USC job portal to view and apply for



current openings.

The site, created by Swanson Russell and Health Sciences Public Relations and Marketing staff, will work in conjunction with other nurse recruitment efforts including seminars and events, incentive programs, print pieces, advertisements and other promotional items.

"The new site will help us get the word out that this is a place where nurses come to stay because they feel confident in their practice and because we provide them with endless opportunities for growth in their careers," said Whalen.

USC study faults drug research for lack of comparative effectiveness

By Leslie Ridgeway

An analysis by researchers at the Keck School of Medicine has found that only 32 percent of medication studies published in top medical journals compare the effectiveness of existing treatments.

These studies, known as comparative effectiveness studies, help doctors know which therapies work best and under what circumstances they are most effective.

More government funding and other changes are needed to promote comparative effectiveness studies and improve their quality, according to the study's co-authors, Michael Hochman, assistant professor of clinical medicine at the Keck School, and Danny McCormick, assistant professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School.

The study, "Characteristics of Published Comparative Effectiveness Studies of Medications," published in the March 10 edition of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA), provides the first formal analysis of comparative effectiveness research, which is a priority issue for the Obama Administration. Last year, Congress appropriated \$1.1 billion in funding for comparative effectiveness studies as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

"Research on new therapies is, of course, critical for scientific advance-

ment, but we also need research that examines how to use existing therapies appropriately," said Hochman, lead author of the study. "For example, which of the more than 30 blood pressure medications on the market works best and in whom? Are certain diets and exercise regimens as good as medications for controlling cholesterol? Is it safe to aim for normal blood sugar levels when treating patients with diabetes? These are questions that comparative effectiveness studies should address."

Hochman and McCormick analyzed 328 medication studies published between June 1, 2008, and Sept. 30, 2009, in six leading medical journals, of which 104 (32 percent) were comparative effectiveness studies, as defined by Hochman and McCormick's analysis. The rest either compared medications against an inactive control group (such as a placebo) or involved unapproved therapies not currently available to doctors.

The study also showed that just 11 percent of the comparative effectiveness studies compared medications with non-pharmacologic therapies (such as lifestyle changes or surgery), and fewer than a third compared different medication strategies (such as the optimal blood sugar target in patients with diabetes). The rest com-

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Colorectal cancer survivors and families vow to fight on at USC Norris event

By Katie Neith

Survivors of colorectal cancer and their families gathered with physicians, nurses and staff for the tenth annual Patient Reception March 6 in the first floor lobby of the USC Norris Cancer Hospital. March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month.

Jennifer Weir, a stage IV colon cancer survivor who was diagnosed at the age of 39, shared her success story about being treated at USC Norris twice in two years.

"I currently have no evidence of disease. I can't say enough about this cozy little hospital that means so much to me," said Weir.

She also commented on another event that happened that weekend in Los Angeles—the Oscars, stating that while movie stars get a lot of attention, "the famous are rarely significant and that the significant are rarely famous."

"I think there are a lot of very significant people in this room, including the research scientists and the doctors that encourage us and hold our hands," said Weir.

Heinz-Josef Lenz, professor of medicine and preventive medicine in the division of medical oncology at the Keck School of Medicine, presented the inaugural "Spirit Award of the Norris" to the wife and son of Martin Franco, a patient who has been fighting colorectal cancer at USC Norris for over seven years. Lenz cited the support of family as critical to the overall success of cancer treatment.



Left, cancer survivor Jennifer Weir speaks at the March 6 survivors event at Norris. Above (from left): Marcelle Eshelman; cancer survivor David Eshelman; Heinz-Josef Lenz, professor of medicine and preventive medicine; and cancer survivor Van Carlson.

He also took a moment to thank the patients and reflect on the positive effect they have had on him.

"My interactions with patients make me a better person," said Lenz. "I am amazed at the resiliency, and the courage and the willingness to fight and help others along. This is an amazing virtue that all of you, as patients, bring to us."

In opening the event, Lenz said, "Over the past 10 years, colon cancer [treatment] has made tremendous progress. For the first time ... we are talking about a cure."

He emphasized that a commitment to basic research and tailored therapies at USC has contributed to the progress, as well as investments from nonprofits that have helped develop new drugs.

"At USC, personalized medicine is an everyday reality. This is still fiction and dream in most centers in the U.S. and the world," said Lenz, who is also associate director of clinical research of the USC

Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, chair of the GI Oncology Program and co-director of the Colorectal Center. "We will never give up until we really have the treatment to cure this terrible disease."

Julie Croner, executive administrator for Norris Cancer Services; Andreas M. Kaiser, associate professor of clinical surgery in the division of colorectal surgery; and Anthony El-Khoueiry, assistant professor of clinical medicine and director of the Clinical Investigations Support Office at USC Norris, also spoke to the group about

improvements in patient care, surgery and clinical trials, respectively. Selma Schimmel, a cancer survivor and patient advocate, spoke about the importance of partnerships between doctors and their patients.

Treated to wine, cheese, desserts and an assortment of other appetizers during a reception that featured a harpist, the event offered the chance for past patients and their families to celebrate life with the physicians who treated them at USC Norris. The theme of the event was "Together We Fight On."

'Over the past 10 years, colon cancer [treatment] has made tremendous progress. For the first time ... we are talking about a cure.'

—Heinz-Josef Lenz, professor of medicine and preventive medicine

ETCETERA

Two Keck School of Medicine radiology professors recently received grants totaling more than \$1 million for imaging research projects.

Peter Conti, director of the USC PET Imaging Science Center and professor of radiology, received \$599,000 from the Department of Energy to help develop efficient methods for the construction of novel multi-labeled molecular probes. The newly developed targeted multimodality probes could have important application in cancer diagnosis and treatment monitoring, targeted radiotherapy and radiation dosimetry estimation, and trafficking nanoparticles in vivo.

Hossein Jadvar, associate professor of radiology and biomedical engineering, received \$447,000 for his project to examine the extent to which prostate cancers metabolize a radioactively tagged nucleotide used in tracking the spread of the disease. The study may eventually help lead to improved imaging, diagnosis and treatment of prostate cancers.

The U.S. Metropolitan Municipalities Emergency Medical Services Medical Directors Consortium has honored **Marc Eckstein**, professor of emergency medicine, with its highest award.

Eckstein recently received the Michael Keys Copass Award, which honors emergency medical services medical directors who demonstrate longstanding service, contributions and leadership in out-of-hospital emergency care and who have served as role models, not only for emergency medical services personnel, but also for fellow 9-1-1 system medical directors across the nation.

The Iranian Student Association, a new student organization within the USC School of Dentistry, is seeking members interested in promoting public health awareness, education, disease prevention and early detection of cancer. This organization reflects the USC School of Dentistry's long tradition and commitment to provide care to the surrounding communities.

Ardeshir Sadekhou, president of the group, said it was formed to sponsor social and cultural activities, as well as public health events. "Our activities will promote an understanding of the Iranian culture, as well as promoting a variety of awareness and educational programs to the public. They will also help foster friendships among our students and faculty, and will provide a source of union and support for our community at USC School of Dentistry."

For information or to join the organization, e-mail USCSDISA@usc.edu or visit their Web site at www.USCdentistryISA.com

DRUG: Study points to insufficient context in evaluating effectiveness

Continued from page 1

pared medications with each other. In addition, just 19 percent of the comparative effectiveness studies focused on safety and only 2 percent included cost-effectiveness analyses.

"Most of the comparative effectiveness studies we reviewed simply tested whether medication 'x' is better than medication 'y,' rather than addressing fundamental questions such as 'How can we use this medication more effectively? When is this medication better than

surgery? Which among two effective approaches is safer?'" said McCormick, the study's senior author.

The research also showed that 87 percent of the comparative effectiveness studies received at least some funding from non-commercial organizations, such as non-profit foundations or government institutions.

Hochman and McCormick believe their results highlight the need for more government funding for comparative effectiveness research.

The Weekly

Next Issue: March 26

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American Society for Clinical Investigation honors USC researchers

By Katie Neith

Two faculty members from the Department of Medicine at the Keck School of Medicine of USC have been elected to the American Society for Clinical Investigation (ASCI).

Alan Yu, associate professor of medicine, and Tzung Hsiai, the Mary G. and Robert G. Lane Early Career Chair

and associate professor of biomedical engineering at the USC Viterbi School of Engineering with a joint appointment in medicine at the Keck School, were named members of the prestigious society as part of a nomination process that takes place once annually.

The ASCI is an honorary society of physician-scientists

who translate findings in the laboratory to the advancement of clinical practice. Each year, ASCI members nominate those they feel have had significant accomplishments at a relatively early age—45 or younger—in their careers. Founded in 1908, the society is home to more than 2,800 members who are in the upper ranks of academic medicine.

“This is an extraordinary honor in academic medicine, particularly for young physician-scientists,” said Edward Crandall, chair of the Department of Medicine, Hastings Professor and Norris Chair of Medicine at the Keck School. “It is indicative of the important and innovative research Drs. Yu and Hsiai have done as faculty members at USC.”

Yu and his research group focus primarily on investigations of structure-function relationships of claudins, proteins that play an important role in the epithelial tissues of the body. He said the studies could have a broad impact on the understanding

of biology and disease in multiple different organ systems. Yu is also studying the role of WNK and Ste20-related kinases in the kidney, which may be novel drug targets for the treatment of high blood pressure.

“I am extremely honored to be elected to a society that values the importance of physician-scientists performing basic research,” said Yu. “I see it as a recognition not just of my research, but of the general health of clinical science research at USC.”

Hsiai was elected to the ASCI based on his work in developing a quantitative nanotechnological approach to analyzing unstable plaque dynamics under complex flow conditions. The ongoing focus of his research is to establish early localization of arterial regions likely to develop high-risk plaque characteristics.

“I feel grateful for the support over the years from the inspiring faculty at USC and hope to reciprocate by mentoring our bright students,” said Hsiai.

‘This is an extraordinary honor in academic medicine, particularly for young physician-scientists’

—Edward Crandall, chair of the Keck School Department of Medicine

A NEW DEVELOPMENT—

The Keck School of Medicine formally welcomed Ann Braun, executive director of development and senior associate dean for resource development, at a reception on March 2.

She is charged with increasing philanthropic support for priority programs in patient care, research and education.



JOHN MAJICK

NIKIAS: ‘To be able to lead this Trojan Family now is the opportunity of a lifetime’

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and we believe that no other person is better suited by experience, temperament or drive to assume the mantle of president.”

Nikias said, “It is the greatest honor to be given this opportunity by USC’s Board of Trustees to work toward realizing the dreams and aspirations of the Trojan Family. The Trustees have committed themselves wholeheartedly to continuing the historic, rapid ascent begun by Steve Sample—and even to accelerating USC’s momentum based on opportunities that lie before us.

“This incredible, wide-ranging university represents an electric environment, one remarkably skilled at producing new ideas and new leaders to strengthen our society. Moving USC forward, and accelerating its breathtaking

momentum, strikes me as the most rewarding endeavor in American higher education today.”

Added Nikias: “For the next five months, of course, USC continues to be led by Steve Sample, who has been America’s most dynamic and successful university president. He and his wife Kathryn have left as their legacy a university that has attained global stature. The only proper way to honor this legacy is to take a great university and make it even greater.

“It has been said that the only sure way to predict the future is to invent it. And because USC’s faculty, students, alumni and staff comprise a global intellectual community of unsurpassed breadth, energy and dedication, I have exceeding confidence in USC’s own future. My wife, Niki, and I and our daughters

love being a ‘Trojan family,’ and we love being a part of the greater Trojan Family. To be able, then, to lead this Trojan Family forward now is the opportunity of a lifetime, as we write together the next chapter in USC’s extraordinary history.”

After being named provost in 2005, Nikias worked with faculty and deans to develop a number of new programs to create a distinct academic environment at USC.

In order to enhance the undergraduate experience for USC students, he established new scholarship programs that reward innovative scholarship and global academic immersion, and sponsored a USC Arts curriculum that encourages cross-arts interdisciplinary programs, including minors, progressive degrees, joint degrees and joint classes. He also drove the creation of

USC’s groundbreaking Visions and Voices initiative in the arts and the humanities, which has drawn tens of thousands of undergraduates from all disciplines to a range of artistic and cultural programming.

Nikias launched other initiatives, including a quintupling of funding for Ph.D. fellowships to \$20 million per year, a grant program for advancing scholarship in the humanities and social sciences, and a program to recruit leading interdisciplinary scholars as Provost’s Professors.

He recruited new leadership to the Keck School of Medicine, spearheaded the integration of the school’s 19 Faculty Practice Plans, and oversaw the transfer of the University Hospital and Norris Cancer Hospital from Tenet Healthcare Corporation to USC.

Nikias was also instrumental in negotiating on behalf of

the university the relocation of the Shoah Foundation—originally established by filmmaker and USC trustee Steven Spielberg—and the establishment of the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education.

He established an Office of Research Advancement in Washington, D.C., that has been directly responsible for helping faculty win more than \$140 million in federal research funding in the past 30 months.

Nikias is a member of the National Academy of Engineering and a Fellow of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, the California Council on Science and Technology, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He is the recipient of the 2008 IEEE Simon Ramo Medal.

The Weekly NEWSMAKERS

A March 16 *Los Angeles Times* article quoted professor of medicine in the cardiovascular division **Robert Kloner** about a new study showing that erectile dysfunction is a strong predictor of fatal heart ailments.

A March 14 *San Diego Union-Tribune* article reported that the Keck School received a \$100,000 grant from the St. Baldrick’s Foundation, which raises money for children’s cancer research and treatment, to create a follow-up care center that will track pediatric cancer patients into adulthood.

A March 9 *Los Angeles Times* article featured a study by assistant professor of clinical medicine **Michael Hochman** and a Harvard University colleague which found that only 32 percent of medication studies published in top medical journals compared the effectiveness of existing treatments. *Reuters, Newsweek, The Boston Globe, Modern Healthcare, BusinessWeek, Nature, Scientific Ameri-*

can, MedPage Today and a widely carried HealthDay News story also covered the research. On March 10, the *Los Angeles Times* ran an op-ed by Hochman about the study.

A March 6 *Asian News International* article featured a study by professor of radiology and orthopedic surgery at the Keck School and Childrens Hospital Los Angeles **Vicente Gilsanz** and a colleague at McGill University which suggested a link between vitamin D insufficiency and increased body fat, decreased muscle strength and a range of other disorders.

A March 5 *Long Beach Press-Telegram* article cited USC research which found that children living or attending school close to major trade corridors suffered disproportionately high asthma rates.

Calendar of Events

This Calendar of events is also online at www.usc.edu/hscalendar for the Health Sciences Campus community

Monday, Mar. 22

Noon. KSOM Research Seminar. "The Cochlear Amplifier – A Tale of Two Motors," Federico Kalinec, House Ear Inst. NRT Aresty Aud. Info: (323) 442-1144

Tuesday, Mar. 23

9 a.m. Neurology Grand Rounds. "The Cutting Edge in Stroke: Updates from the International Stroke Conference 2010," May Kim and Nerses Sanossian, USC. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-7686

Noon. Psychiatry Grand Rounds. "Functional Brain Mapping in Animals: New Insight from Old Models," Daniel Holschneider, USC. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-4065

Wednesday, Mar. 24

8:30 a.m. "Lung Transplant," Michael McFadden, USC. IRD 732. Info: (323) 226-7923

Noon. USC Center for Excellence in Teaching. "Best Practices to Provide Effective Feedback and Evaluate Your Learners," Win May and Donna Elliott, USC. KAM B21/23. Info: (213) 740-3959

Noon. "Financing a Career in Primary Care," Hector Flores and Chris Hiromura, White Memorial Medical Ctr., Alicia Rugley, USC. HMR 100. Info: (323) 442-1678

Thursday, Mar. 25

Noon. KSOM Cellular Homeostasis Lecture Series. "MicroRNA Regulation of Cell Fate Decisions," Deepak Srivastava, UC San Francisco. MCH 156. Info: (323) 442-3109

4 p.m. "Immune Thrombocytopenic Purpura: Is the Management Paradigm Changing?" James George, Univ. of Oklahoma. NRT LG503. Info: (323) 865-3913

Friday, Mar. 26

8 a.m. Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Grand Rounds. "Medico-Legal Death Investigation in LA County – Unusual Case Scenarios," Lakshmanan Sathyavagiswaran, USC. NOR 7409. Info: (323) 442-1180

8:30 a.m. Pulmonary & Critical Care Medicine Lec-

ture. "Metalloproteinases: Effectors of Inflammation," William Parks, Univ. of Washington. IRD 732. Info: (323) 226-7923

8:30 a.m. "Thrombotic Thrombocytopenic Purpura: A Community Perspective," James George, Univ. of Oklahoma. IPT C2J104. Info: (323) 865-3913

Noon. Pharmacology and Pharmaceutical Sciences Seminar. "Monoamine Oxidase and Factors in the Assessment of Drug Potency," Rona Ramsay, Univ. of St. Andrews, Scotland. PSC 104. Info: (323) 442-1551

Noon. "Case Presentations," Angie Sadeghi, USC. OPT A5C129. Info: (323) 409-7995

Wednesday, Mar. 31

8:30 a.m. "Classification of Lung Cancer," Michael Koss, USC. IRD 732. Info: (323) 226-7923

1 – 5 p.m. KSOM Parent's Association. "Mini-Medical Day," Various speakers, campus and LAC+USC Tours. KAM Mayer Aud. Info: (323) 442-1084

Thursday, Apr. 1

Noon. KSOM Cellular Homeostasis Lecture Series. "Role of Pref-1 in Adipogenesis and Mesenchymal Cell Fate," Hei Sul, UC Berkeley. MCH 156. Info: (323) 442-3109

Tuesday, Apr. 6

Noon. Psychiatry Grand Rounds. "ADHD and Addiction," Paul Erickson, Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-4065

Wednesday, Apr. 7

5 p.m. Global Health Visions for Change Lecture. "Follow the Money: Covering the Surge of Funds for HIV/AIDS," John Cohen, Science Magazine. NRT Aresty Aud. Info: (323) 865-0419

Thursday, Apr. 8

Noon. KSOM Cellular Homeostasis Lecture Series. "The Na⁺/Dicarboxylate Cotransporters from the SLC13 Family," Ana Pajor, UC San Diego. MCH 156. Info: (323) 442-3109

Notice: Deadline for calendar submission is 4 p.m. Monday to be considered for that week's issue—although three weeks' advance notice of events is recommended. Please note that timely submission does not guarantee an item will be printed. Send calendar items to *The Weekly*, KAM 400 or fax to (323) 442-2832, or e-mail to eblaauw@usc.edu. Entries must include day, date, time, title of talk, first and last name of speaker, affiliation of speaker, location, and a phone number for information.

Global health funding expert Joe Cerrell says major successes going unnoticed

By Katie Neith

In a recent visit to the Health Sciences Campus, Joe Cerrell, USC alumnus and director of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Europe Office, aimed to change what he sees as the negative story of global health.

"For many Americans, and perhaps for many in this room, the old dominant story of global health is one of problems, of desperation, of guilt and an enduring crisis," said Cerrell at "Global Advocacy, Policy and Change," a Global Health Lecture Series: Visions for Change event held March 3 at the Aresty Auditorium.

An expert in global health funding and advocacy, Cerrell said the truth—and the story that needs to be told—is that we have made tremendous strides in global health.

"Until we get much better at conveying the progress and successes that we've seen in global health in the last century, we will have a very difficult time sustaining, much less increasing, global investments in global health in the future," he said.

Using examples from the Gates Foundation's Living Proof Project, Cerrell outlined key areas where U.S. and global investments have made a measurable impact in the health and lives of people around the world. He cited decreases in child deaths, successful vaccine programs and improvements in HIV/AIDS drug delivery as a few examples of accomplishment.

"People want to invest in success, not failure, so we need to share the proof—the living proof—that America's generosity, and the world's generosity, is in fact making a difference," said Cerrell, calling on the audience to help tell a new positive story of global health.

He said it is important for the public to know that investments in global health are working in order to support U.S. funding of global health.

"This is the most effective investment the governments

can make for saving lives," he emphasized.

Cerrell also spoke at the University Park Campus on March 2. The Visions for Change lecture series is a partnership between the Norman Lear Center's

Hollywood, Health & Society and the USC Institute for Global Health.

For more information on the Gates Foundation's Living Proof Project, visit: <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/livingproofproject>



Joe Cerrell, USC alumnus and director of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Europe Office, speaks on the largely unsung global health achievements of recent decades as part of the Global Health Lecture Series: Visions for Change event held March 3 at the Aresty Auditorium.

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