

Primary Care Week examines challenges of health care reform

'It's important for us to create a system of care that treats patients with respect, compassion and competence'

—Hector Flores, co-director of the family medicine residency program at White Memorial Medical Center and keynote speaker for Primary Care Week

It is incumbent upon members of health care professions to make health care reform work, and primary care will play a central role in those efforts, according to Hector Flores, keynote speaker for Primary Care Week.

Flores, who is co-director of the family medicine residency program at White Memorial Medical Center, spoke Oct. 18 in Aresty Auditorium at the week's opening event, hosted by Keck School of Medicine Dean Carmen A. Puliafito. Co-sponsored by the Keck School of Medicine and Charles Drew University of Medicine and Science, Primary Care Week included a series of panels and discussions both on academic campuses and at community clinics.

The major challenge to health care today is to "retool," Flores said. He advocated for high performance health care that is anchored on primary care in a "patient-centered medical home," featuring coordination, safety, quality, access, information technology and use of evidence-based medicine 100 percent of the time for 100 percent of the patients.

"It's important for us to create a system of care that treats patients with respect, compassion and competence," Flores said. "What all of this is about is going back to the roots of humanism in health care and understanding that it's in our hands to make health care reform work."



Christopher Hiramura, faculty member in the White Memorial Medical Center family medicine residency program, discusses financial resources available to students interested in the field of primary care. Also pictured is Victoria Sorlie-Aguilar, a fellow participant in the Oct. 21 panel.

A major challenge of health care reform will be the expected influx of patients to the system. "One of the anxious moments is this issue of do we have enough doctors, do we have enough health care providers to deal with the tens of millions of Americans who will have—we believe—better access to health care," Puliafito said.

Exacerbating the influx of patients is a decrease in the number of primary care physicians. "Right now only one-third of

all doctors in the U.S. are primary care physicians," said Elaine Batchlor, chief medical officer of L.A. Care Health Plan, one of the major sponsors of Primary Care Week. "The number of medical students going into primary care has gone down 52 percent since 1997. The Association of American Medical Colleges predicts that we will be short 21,000 primary care physicians by 2015."

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Peter Jones to step down from Cancer Center directorship, focus on research

By Katie Neith

A deep passion for research has driven Peter Jones to a number of great successes as director of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center for the past 17 years. And it is his love for science that ultimately informed a recent decision to step down from his leadership position at USC Norris, pending the appointment of his successor.

"The most important reason I am stepping down as director is a

positive reason," said Jones, who has served as director of the cancer center since 1993. "My research field of epigenetics is really taking off. I want to be able to concentrate on a rapidly expanding field, a very exciting field which is attracting international interest."

In addition, Jones said he believes leadership change is important for any organization and that the cancer center is in particularly good shape to benefit from a new director.

"It will be an amazing opportunity because the new director is coming into a center which is a real focus of not only the medical school, but of the whole university," said Jones.



Peter Jones has successfully led the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center as director for the past 17 years.

Carmen A. Puliafito, dean of the Keck School of Medicine, praised Jones for helping establish a world-class cancer center at USC. "Through his leadership, the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center has built on its strengths to become a leading-edge center for innovative research. Peter has set the stage for a successful future at Norris and will continue to lead the center toward progress through his breakthrough work in epigenetics."

During Jones' time as director, the center has grown both in numbers and size. In 1996, the Topping Tower added 25 new laboratories and tripled the size of the outpatient

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Health Sciences IT staff move to Alhambra

By Tania Chatila

The USC Health Sciences Information Technology Department has a new home.

About 60 members of the roughly 80-member team moved into a 16,000-square-foot space at the Health Sciences Alhambra campus this month. The move was part of a strategic effort to free up clinical space at the two USC-owned hospitals, as well as centralize what used to be scattered teams of IT staff.

The IT application support, IT infrastructure support and IT help desk teams completed their move on Nov. 1 and are currently sharing an entire floor in the A9 West Building with the staff of the Medical Call Center.

The teams remaining on the Health Sciences Campus include: desktop support, project managers, purchasing/budget, asset and communications management and telecommunications.

The USC Health Sciences Information Technology Department provides support to USC University Hospital, USC Norris Cancer Hospital, the Keck School of Medicine and

The Doctors of USC.

"The approach we took was to relocate those employees who don't interface with customers regularly," said Keith Paul, chief technology officer for USC Health Sciences. "Those staff members who do work with our customers on a day-to-day basis—like our computer and phone technicians—they will remain on site. This way, we are supporting the expansion of services on the Health Sciences Campus without jeopardizing our level of service."

At the Alhambra site, IT employees who were once scattered throughout the hospitals, Healthcare Consultation Center II and the Keck School are now working together in a more strategic office environment, said Kim Hayes, manager of the IT help desk.

"It's a much nicer space and we have plenty of room to grow," she said. "But really the biggest perk is improved communication within IT. By pulling our resources together, we can encourage increased collaboration within our own department."

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HFCS-sweetened sodas deliver unexpected jolt of fructose

‘The elevated fructose levels in the sodas most Americans drink are of particular concern because of the negative effects fructose has on the body.’

— Michael Goran, founding director of the USC Childhood Obesity Research Center

While soda reigns as the single largest contributor to America’s rapidly expanding waistlines, research released in October shows that the high fructose corn syrup (HFCS) used to sweeten the country’s most popular beverages is delivering a megadose of fructose (a sweeter and more harmful form of sugar), far higher than previously thought.

Researchers at the Childhood Obesity Research Center at the Keck School of Medicine analyzed the sugar profiles of 23 popular sodas and discovered surprising information about the amount of fructose in the drinks. Contrary to prevailing assumptions, the findings show that the HFCS (a mixture of glucose and fructose produced from corn) in popular sodas may be as high as 65 percent fructose, nearly 20 percent higher than researchers previously believed.

“The elevated fructose

levels in the sodas most Americans drink are of particular concern because of the negative effects fructose has on the body,” explained study author Michael Goran. “Unlike glucose (the smaller component of HFCS), over consumption of fructose is directly responsible for a broad spectrum of negative health effects.”

The weight gain caused by sugary sodas can dramatically increase the risk for type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. But, as Goran points out, because the body processes fructose differently than glucose, consuming large amounts of fructose greatly exacerbates the risk for those diseases by also causing fatty liver disease, insulin resistance, increased triglyceride levels and an acute rise in blood pressure.

The average American drinks over 50 gallons of soda a year, ingesting about 34 pounds of sugar. Over the

past 30 years, the jump in consumption of soda accounts for 43 percent of the per capita increase in daily caloric intake, making it the prime driver behind the obesity epidemic.

“Given the huge amount of soda Americans consume, it’s important that we have a more exact understanding of what we’re drinking, including specific label information on the types of sugars. The lack of information—or perhaps even misinformation—we have had about the fructose levels in HFCS-sweetened beverages means that soda drinkers may be gambling with their health even more than we have previously thought,” said Harold Goldstein, director of the California Center for Public Health Advocacy.

The study raises questions about the accuracy of nutrition label reporting by manufacturers. When testing the Mexican Coca-Cola that lists “sugar” on the ingredient list, for instance, the researchers did not

detect any sucrose (traditional sugar) but rather found near equal amounts of fructose and glucose, results which suggest the use of HFCS.

The full study, “Sugar content of popular sweetened beverages based on objective laboratory analysis: focus on fructose content,” was published in October in the journal *Obesity*.

A full-text of the study can be found at http://goranlab.com/research_news/index.html.

The University of Southern California’s Childhood Obesity Research Center is a collaborative effort between USC and Childrens Hospital Los Angeles. Home to one of the nation’s leading research teams addressing childhood obesity, the center strives to understand childhood obesity and its related conditions, to examine its relationship to minority health, and to develop novel strategies for prevention and treatment.

PRIMARY CARE: More physicians needed to boost health care affordability

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Calling the challenge “a question about medical manpower on every level,” Puliafito said, “We need to figure out how physicians, nurse practitioners and physician assistants can work together in delivery teams so that we can provide care to the most patients in the most effective way.”

In a panel discussion on Oct. 20, Steven Steinberg, family medicine chief of service at Kaiser Permanente-Panorama City, said that electronic medical records (EMR) are tools that help provide seamless care, easing interactions between primary care physicians and specialists. Unfortunately, the EMR systems used by different health care providers are often incompatible. An effort is beginning to enable emergency

rooms within a state to access some information from all the EMRs in that state. “We’re chipping away at this problem, but it’s still a very difficult climb,” Steinberg said.

Attracting more young physicians into primary care would help to improve affordable health care delivery, speakers agreed. An Oct. 21 panel of Keck School alumni and Foundation Circle of organizations offering financial resources and residency information addressed the financial issues that discourage entry into primary care—debt from medical student loans and lower salaries than specialists.

“You aren’t going to make as much in a primary care field as you are in a subspecialty field—that’s a fact,” said Christopher Hiromura, faculty member in the White

Memorial Medical Center family medicine residency program. “But you aren’t poverty-stricken either. You’re going to have a 30- to 40-year career getting paid relatively well. ... So in the grand scheme of things, that loan isn’t a huge deal, and it shouldn’t determine what you’re going to be doing the rest of your life. There’s lots of different ways of paying it off.”

Another alumnus, Edward Chambers, deferred his loan repayment for three years while he started his private pediatrics practice in Thousand Oaks. “I have enough to pay my mortgage and basketball shoes for the kids, and birthday parties, vacations and just regular expenses of life,” he said.

Beth Julian-Wang, an obstetrician/gynecologist in

private practice in Pasadena, said, “My biggest piece of advice would be to pick the specialty that you’re going to love, be passionate about and enjoy every single day. ... Whether it takes you 10 or 15 years to pay off your loan is not going to make a difference once you’re happy with what you’re doing.”

Read more about Primary Care Week at <http://tinyurl.com/2c6u2xp>. For webcasts of Primary Care Week panel

discussions, see: <http://tinyurl.com/2gye93x>.

For more information about the Keck-USC Primary Care Community Medicine Program, contact project coordinator Yvonne Banzali at banzali@usc.edu and co-directors Jo Marie Reilly at jmreilly@usc.edu, Michael Cousineau at cousineau@usc.edu and Erin Quinn at erinquin@usc.edu or visit the Keck primary care website at primarycare.usc.edu.



Tania Chatila

Victor Patino, with USC Health Sciences Information Technology HelpDesk/Desktop Support, takes a call at Health Sciences Campus Alhambra. Patino is one of about 60 IT employees who moved into a 16,000-square-foot office space there on Nov. 1.

IT: Move intended to boost customer service

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Benjamin McLarin, director of Client Services for IT, said operations have been smooth since the move and assures the Health Sciences Campus that customer service would not be adversely affected. “In actuality, our response time

will improve since several previously geographically dispersed teams have been consolidated into one central location,” McLarin said. “One of our biggest priorities is improving our customer service, and we remain committed to that goal.”

The Weekly

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USC graduate dives into health policy issues as a new White House intern

By Meghan Lewit
Harut Hovsepyan, a 2010 graduate of the Master of Public Health program, has gone straight from the Keck School of Medicine to the White House. Since August, Hovsepyan, 26, has been interning at the White House Office of Health Reform, working on implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.
As a student at the Keck School, it

was an Advanced Policy course taught by Professor Michael Cousineau that inspired Hovsepyan to pursue health policy. Students in the class were required to read the entire law and assess its impact on health care in the United States.
“I realized how vital policy is in impacting how patients on the ground receive the care they need,” he said.
After a rigorous application process,

Hovsepyan was accepted to the White House Internship Program, aimed at training young leaders for a future in public service.
“I am thankful for this opportunity to learn at such a high level of public service,” he said. “Thanks to my education and experiences I had at Keck, I am serving in the Executive Office of the President.”
Hovsepyan, a native of Armenia

who emigrated to the U.S. as a child, attended Bravo Medical Magnet High School, which gave him the opportunity to work with researchers at the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center. For the past five years, he has also volunteered with the USC Good Neighbors Campaign through several programs at the Keck School.
“His experience has given him a unique perspective on both the strengths and weaknesses of the U.S. health care system, and ideas for improving it,” said Cousineau, associate professor of research and director of the Center for Community Health Studies at the Keck School. “This combined with his academic work makes him especially helpful in understanding how the new law will affect patients and communities, including those served by USC Health Sciences.”
After completing the internship in December, Hovsepyan plans to attend medical school.
“While I love working on health policy, my heart lies on the provider side of the table,” he said. “I plan to serve as a primary care physician in underserved areas to help build up our primary care infrastructure in the U.S.”



THE BUSINESS OF MEDICINE—The Keck School of Medicine joined with the USC Marshall School of Business Alumni Association to present “Business Opportunities and Challenges in the New Era of Health Care Reform” on Oct. 28 at the Aresty Auditorium of the Harlyne Norris Cancer Research Tower. Moderated by Keck School Dean Carmen A. Puliafito, the panel featured Mitch Creem, chief executive officer of USC’s hospitals; Robert Margolis, chief executive officer and managing partner of HealthCare Partners in Torrance, Calif.; James Ellis, dean of the USC Marshall School of Business; and Mitchell Lew, chief medical officer of Prospect Medical Group. The panelists discussed their ideas for the future of health care and the business opportunities that may come out of reform, such as new enterprises focused on telemedicine, coordination of care and improved technology. Above from left are Marcelo Bermudez, president of the L.A. Chapter of the USC Marshall Alumni, Creem, Margolis, Puliafito and Lew.

JONES: ‘There are big projects happening that I don’t want to short change’

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clinics serving the USC Norris Cancer Hospital. Under the direction of Jones, the Harlyne J. Norris Research Tower was conceived and built, giving the center a 172,000-square-foot building dedicated solely to cancer research in 2007.
In addition to research space, funding and recruitment have grown considerably since 1993. The center currently has nearly 200 members from 24 departments, across

six schools at the university. Researchers are involved in 22 multi-investigational or institutional grants and 229 open clinical trials. Thirty-eight new recruits have been made over the past five years and approximately 25 endowed chairs have been named during Jones’ tenure.
“There is a huge opportunity for the center to build on our exceptional strength in basic cancer research and epidemiology, and a rapidly

growing strength in clinical research, to marry those together and take it to the next level,” said Jones.
A distinguished professor of urology and biochemistry & molecular biology at the Keck School of Medicine, Jones is a pioneer in the field of epigenetics, the study of changes in gene silencing affected by the epigenome—a series of chemicals that attach to DNA and control access to the genes without actually

changing the fundamental genetic information. In the past two years, he has won the AACR Kirk A. Landon Prize for Basic Cancer Research, a MERIT Award from the National Cancer Institute and the David Workman Memorial Award from the Samuel Waxman Cancer Research Foundation for his research. He will receive the distinguished service award at the 2011 Miami Winter Symposium sponsored by *Nature* magazine. In addition, he was named an American Association for the Advancement of Science Fellow in 2010. He is a past president of the American Association for Cancer Research.
Jones played a role in establishing the International Human Epigenome Consortium, a project to which he will continue to devote time, and is part of a “Dream Team” named by Stand Up To Cancer, a charitable initiative that supports research aimed at getting new cancer treatments to patients in an accelerated timeframe. As a member of

one of the first of five “Dream Teams” to receive funding for groundbreaking research, Jones is co-leading the project, which will evaluate existing epigenetic therapies and work to develop new drugs to treat cancer. An article in the Oct. 29 issue of *Science* magazine highlighted the epigenetic research of Jones and Stephen Baylin, a researcher at Johns Hopkins who is co-leading the Stand Up To Cancer team with Jones.
“To be a leader in the field, and to see epigenetic therapy become a reality, are accomplishments I am very proud of,” said Jones. “There are big projects happening that I don’t want to short change, so it’s time for me to focus solely on my research.”
Jon Samet, founding director of the USC Institute for Global Health and chair of the Keck School’s Department of Preventive Medicine, is chairing the search committee. Candidates for consideration should be directed to Warren Ross, KornFerry search consultant, at Warren.Ross@korn.Ferry.com.



LATINO HEALTH – From left, USC School of Pharmacy students Linda Khatchatourian and Ashley Klevens provide diabetes and cholesterol screenings for participants at the first “Health of the Latino Community in Los Angeles” event, held Oct. 2 on the Health Sciences Campus. The Spanish-language event was co-hosted by the Consulate General of Mexico and USC Community Partnerships. Keck School of Medicine Dean Carmen A. Puliafito welcomed the participants.

The Weekly NEWSMAKERS

A Nov. 5 *Chicago Tribune* article quoted assistant professor of environmental health **Scott Fruin** about commuters’ exposure to air pollution, and noted that he has done research in the field.
A Nov. 4 Reuters article featured research led by assistant professor of maternal and fetal medicine **Marlena Fejzo**, which found that women were more likely to experience a serious form of morning sickness if their mothers and sisters did as well. KNBC-TV also featured the research.

On Nov. 1 CNN noted work by professor of ophthalmology at Doheny Eye Institute **Alfredo Sadun**, who is researching a cure for a rare eye disease called Leber’s hereditary optic neuropathy.
On Oct. 27 the *San Bernardino County Sun* highlighted professor of medicine and director of the USC Center for Applied Molecular Medicine and the USC Westside Prostate Cancer Center **David Agus**, who spoke at a recent meeting of the President’s Cancer Panel, which advises the White House on the development and execution of the National Cancer Program.

The Doctors of USC formally opens new satellite office in La Cañada

By Tania Chatila and Tony Yang

A satellite location for The Doctors of USC is now open in La Cañada, the first step in creating a new USC network of care throughout the region.

More than 50 officials from the two USC-owned hospitals, The Doctors of USC and the La Cañada community attended a special ribbon cutting and grand opening ceremony at the office on Nov. 3 to officially usher USC health care professionals into the neighborhood.

The practice, which saw its first patient on Aug. 2, is staffed by faculty members of the Keck School of Medicine. It provides primary care and internal medicine services. Sabrina Hong, Mark Kang, Wesley Miao and Bonnie Moura together see patients five days a week at the practice, located at 1751 Foothill Boulevard, Suite 3, near the end of the 2 Freeway. They’ve had about 125 office visits since August.

“We are proud to be the first location of [The Doctors of USC] satellite offices,” said La Cañada Mayor Donald Voss. He, along with representatives from local law enforcement and civic leader offices, presented commendations to The

Doctors of USC at the grand opening. Other notables in attendance that afternoon were David Goldstein, vice chair for clinical affairs at the Department of Medicine at the Keck School; Minor Anderson, chief executive officer of The Doctors of USC; and Mitch Creem, chief executive officer of USC University Hospital and USC Norris Cancer Hospital.

“The opening of the La Cañada office is an important step for the USC hospitals,” Creem said. “We are bringing the new USC brand of medicine to the communities that we serve—a brand of excellence, a brand of innovation, a brand inspiring hope.”

On Oct. 16, the office held a community health fair, which attracted more than 100 people for free flu shots, glucose, blood pressure and BMI screenings, lipid testing and educational opportunities.

“We invited area residents to see who we are and to share in our vision of bringing the highest level of academic medicine to the community,”



From left, Donald Voss, La Cañada Flintridge Mayor; Mitch Creem, CEO, USC University Hospital and USC Norris Cancer Hospital; David Goldstein, chief of the division of geriatric, hospital and general internal medicine, Keck School of Medicine; Scott Evans, COO, USC University Hospital and USC Norris Cancer Hospital; Minor Anderson, CEO, The Doctors of USC; and Edward Crandall, chair, Department of Medicine, open the new The Doctors of USC La Cañada office at a Nov. 3 grand opening.

said Goldstein. “Our skilled physicians are also highly regarded teachers at the Keck School. Part of our job is to help guide patients through the complex medical environment that we all confront.”

Future services at La Cañada will include rheumatology, cardiology, diabetes and women’s health.

“For residents of the La Cañada Flintridge community, this is an opportunity to

find world class medicine right in their neighborhood, and a direct path to all of the resources offered at the USC Health Sciences Campus,” said Scott Evans, chief operating officer of USC University Hospital and USC Norris Cancer Hospital. “We’re very pleased to support The Doctors of USC in extending its primary care services into the community.”

Visit doctorsofusc.com/lacanada for more information.

Calendar of Events

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

Monday, Nov. 15

Noon. KSOM Research Seminar. “Fibroblast Motility and Mechanics in Three-Dimensional Collagen Matrices,” Frederick Grinnell, UT Southwestern Medical Ctr. NRT Aresty Aud. Info: (323) 442-1144

Tuesday, Nov. 16

Noon. Psychiatry Grand Rounds. “Pharmacotherapy for People with Schizophrenia and Co-occurring Substance Use,” Douglas Noordsy, Dartmouth. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-4065

Noon. KSOM Dean’s Translational Medicine Seminar. “New Challenges to Human Research Protections in Post-Genomic Medicine,” Frederick Grinnell, UT Southwestern Medical Ctr. NRT Aresty Aud. Info: (323) 442-1144

Wednesday, Nov. 17

Noon. USC Work & Family Life. “Empowering Yourself for Positive Change,” Ken Howard, private practice psychotherapist. CHP 233D. Info: (213) 821-0800

Thursday, Nov. 18

4 p.m. CER Workshop. “Developing NIH Grant Applications,” Steve Moldin, USC. NML East Conference Rm. Info: (213) 740-6709

Friday, Nov. 19

8 a.m. Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Grand Rounds. “Molecular Pathogenesis of B-cell Lymphoma,” Ryan Phan, UCLA. NOR 7409. Info: (323) 442-1180

8:30 a.m. Surgical Grand Rounds. The 12th Annual Leonard and Marie Louise Rosoff Lecture in General Surgery. “The Joy of Mentoring,” Thomas Berne, USC. DOH 100. Info: (323) 442-2506

11:30 a.m. USC Physical Sciences in Oncology Seminar. “Modeling Active Processes in Cancer Progression and Embryogenesis,” Timothy Newman, Arizona State Univ. CSC 240. Info: (323) 442-2596

Noon. ZNI Special Seminar. “Autism: Where Genetics Meets the Immune System,” Antonio Persico, Universita Campus Bio-Medico di Roma (Italia). ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-2144

Sunday, Nov. 21

8:30 a.m. USC Institute of Urology LA Prostate Cancer 5K. San Vicente Blvd. in Brentwood. Registration is \$35. Info: (323) 865-3700

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.

L.A. County officials honor LAC+USC Kidney Stone Center

The Comprehensive Kidney Stone Center at LAC+USC Medical Center was honored by Los Angeles County with the Traditional Award of Merit in recognition of their commendable achievement in public service.

“Since the center officially opened in July 2009, Matt Dunn and I with the help of our entire team have shown significant improvements from the previous model of treating stone disease at LAC+USC Medical Center,” said Charles Best, director of the Comprehensive Kidney Stone Center.

Their newly developed plan for patient efficiency has resulted in patient appointment wait time decreasing from seven months to 50 days, cancellation rate decreasing from 25 percent to seven percent, and they went from treating approximately 200 patients per year to more than 300 patients per year.

The comprehensive model allows for a seamless transition from the referral process through treatment. All services to treat kidney stones

are available to patients, including a Lithotripsy unit, advanced endoscopic modalities and nutritional counseling for prevention. When additional resources become available, the team hopes to expand the programs, treat more patients and even further reduce patient

appointment wait time.

“We take great pride in the work we do at LAC+USC Medical Center,” says Inderbir Gill, professor and chairman, Department of Urology. “The team is honored to be recognized by the county for its tremendous work.”

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