

SHARE & CARE

THE RECOVERY OF HOPE ~ THE HOPE OF RECOVERY

Psychedelic drugs could be a transformative approach to treating mental health conditions like depression, especially for those who don't respond to traditional treatments. Researchers at McGill University recently led a study that concluded that using drugs such as LSD and psilocybin (an active compound in 'magic mushrooms') could become more widely used in treating mental health disorders.

What is it, and how does it work?

Here in Quebec, psychedelic therapy is legally accessible for treating conditions such as depression, anxiety, and PTSD.

It requires a medical prescription and is administered under strict guidelines.

After a rigorous screening process, patients meet with therapists to learn how to navigate the experience and set intentions. 1-3 sessions with psychedelics are

THERE'S GOT TO BE A BETTER WAY TO TREAT DEPRESSION!

Psychedelics could be the answer

conducted in a controlled environment under professional supervision. Each session can last anywhere from 4-8 hours, with the drugs ingested in capsule or liq-

uid form, or in some cases from an IV. This is followed by more therapy, where the therapist and patient discuss the psychedelic experience and work to use insights to change behaviours and emotions.

Is it effective?

Several studies have shown that psychedelics can improve depressive symptoms very rapidly, even within hours of administration. Improving symptoms quickly can be crucial for someone who is in acute distress. This is potentially an enormous improvement from traditional antidepressants which can take weeks to show any effects.

One study showed that a single dose could improve symptoms of depression for up to a year, and another trial showed that after treatment, two thirds of patients continued to have alleviated symptoms five years later.

How can it help with depression?

Early research has shown that psychedelics may temporarily undo default brain patterns, which allows brain flexibility and the possibility of a reset. Patients can break free of rigid behaviours associated with depression, which helps them gain emotional insights and fresh perspectives that continue long after the treatment. This, in turn, helps to develop healthier habits and relationships which help protect against depressive symptoms returning.

MEET OUR AWARD RECIPIENTS!
SEE PAGES 4 & 5

COME CHECK OUT AMI'S LIBRARY!

Our library is open again! It holds almost 500 books on mental illness and mental health, from best sellers to self-help volumes and practical information. Many well-known authors writing about mental illness are represented and there is information for all interests. Our books also cover all knowledge levels, from the popular "for Dummies" series to clinical information. We've also got biographies and books for kids. Our library is user friendly, with a colour-coded system to help you find the subject you are seeking.

Free access to the library is one of the perks of AMI membership. Visit amiquebec.org/membership to learn more about membership.



Open Thursdays 10am-4pm, or when you are at the office for a counselling appointment or event, and by appointment—call 514-486-1448.

Members can borrow three items at a time for three weeks, and may renew for a further three weeks. Come visit—our office is at 5800 boul. Decarie in Montreal. If you're interested in mental illness and mental health, you owe it to yourself to check it out!

Visit amiquebec.org/library for more information. □



continued on page 2

Psychedelics ... continued from page 1

This sounds too good to be true! Is it something I should try?

If you want to know more about this treatment, speak to a therapist or psychiatrist, or explore research regulated programs in your area. Remember to be fully honest about your mental health and medical history so that both you and the professionals can ascertain whether this could be a viable option.

Currently, the only candidates considered are those who have not responded to conventional medication and therapy. This treatment isn't suitable for everyone, as psychedelics can instead worsen mental health conditions. The experience can be extremely emotional and intense, and there are potential risks, such as anxiety, panic, or aggravating underlying mental health issues. Most trials exclude people with bipolar disorder because it may trigger a manic episode.

Don't try this at home

Though psychedelics may seem like a very fast and straightforward cure, this should only be attempted under proper medical supervision. Preparation and structured support from trained clinicians and therapists before, during, and after is essential.

Looking to the future

While researchers caution that more study is required, early findings are very promising. A treatment for certain mental health conditions that works quickly, lasts long-term, and is without side effects is an incredible prospect. Encouragingly, extensive research is ongoing, and our understanding will continue to improve. □

– Emily Verrall

Visit amiquebec.org/sources-for-references

MYTH BUSTERS

POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION

Our Mythbusters series continues with a look at postpartum depression.

All women feel joy and glow during pregnancy.

There is an idea that because they are developing a life inside them that a pregnant woman should feel the joy of the miracle of life. However, about 10% of women will experience depression during their pregnancy. This can cause feelings of shame, especially since pregnancy is supposed to be a joyful time.

Pregnant women don't get depressed. It's just a change in hormones.

It is true that pregnancy causes changes in hormones and that this can affect women after delivering a baby, but postpartum depression ranges from a few months to longer periods of time. There are several factors that can contribute to a woman's depression, including past history of a mood or anxiety disorder, lack of sleep, external stressors, genetics, problems with their baby's health, and lack of a support system.

Postpartum depression only starts a few weeks after the baby is born.

Although there are more risk factors, and the symptoms of postpartum depression often show up a few weeks or a few months after the birth of their child, some studies show that women can experience postpartum depression any time during the baby's first year of life. Some women might not experience postpartum depression during one birth, but experience it in a subsequent one.

Postpartum depression is the same thing as the Baby Blues.

Many women feel the "Baby Blues" after the birth of their child. Baby Blues occur in many women in the first two or three days after the birth. They may experience mood swings, crying, fear, anxiety, and difficulty sleeping. This can last up to two weeks. Postpartum depression occurs when these symptoms become more severe, last longer, and are more difficult to manage.

Postpartum depression makes women susceptible to harming their baby. They will act on their intrusive thoughts.

While many mothers worry about their new babies, less than 0.1% of new moms experience postpartum psychosis. This happens when a mother loses touch with reality and experiences hallucinations and/or delusions. This can be very dangerous for the mother and/or her child(ren) and is considered a medical emergency. Women living with or who have a family history of severe mental health conditions are more likely to experience postpartum psychosis.

Postpartum depression only affects women.

Women are not the only ones who experience postpartum depression. According to a 2022 study, 22% of fathers have elevated rates of anxiety and depression during the first year of their child's life. Paternal postpartum depression is often overlooked because of stigma and lack of awareness. Men also exhibit different symptoms of depression when compared to women, and often they do not know that they are experiencing depression in the first place. Another study found that the postpartum depression in men often follows the onset in women's depression, and that symptoms begin later and more gradually during the pregnancy and first year.

Postpartum depression cannot be cured.

There are different treatment options available to women who are experiencing postpartum depression. Some of these treatments might be tried simultaneously to ensure a full recovery. The treatments used are usually the same as those used for depression such as psychotherapy, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), counselling, social and emotional support from friends and family, antidepressants, or electro-convulsive therapy (ECT).

Find help for postpartum depression in yourself or a loved one: amiquebec.org/PPD □

– Gabrielle Lesage

Visit amiquebec.org/sources-for-references

Can My Plate Affect My Mood?

Food is an important part of our daily lives. It gives us sustenance and energy, opens us up to gastronomical experiences, and can bring people together. Even though it has a role in our everyday routine, sometimes we are unaware of how much the foods we consume can affect our bodies and minds. This idea is related to the



emerging field of nutritional psychology, which aims to understand the relationship between what we eat and mental wellness. Do the foods we eat affect our moods and our mental health?

A study done in 2017 in Australia yielded interesting results. A group of 67 people, all clinically depressed and taking medication, were split into two groups. One had meetings with a dietician who guided them to follow a Mediterranean diet (which consists of more fruits and vegetables, unprocessed grains, fish and seafood and modest amounts of lean meats and dairy) and the other group would meet with a research assistant who would provide social support but they continued their current diet trends. Before the study, both groups had the same diet (Western), which consisted of more sugary and processed foods, with minimum quantities of fruits and vegetables. Important to note is that the participants continued to take their medication as was prescribed by their doctor. The study lasted for 12 weeks, and by the end both groups had better depression scores, but those who followed the Mediterranean diet had improved more than the control group.

Several studies have also shown the benefits of a more traditional diet like the Mediterranean and Japanese diets. For example, in one study, the risk of depression was up to 35% lower in people who followed a Mediterranean diet versus a Western diet. Subsequently, The New York Times reported that other research showed that those who ate more nutrient-dense foods reported lower depression and higher happiness.

While glucose is our body's default energy source, having too much of it is known to be detrimental to the health of both the body and brain. Evidence suggests that high-sugar diets are more likely to lead to low mood in people

both with and without depression. Research has shown that following a low carb diet, even partially, can help reduce symptoms of depression, schizophrenia, and even eating disorders (all monitored closely by medical professionals).

Does all of this mean that we should completely stop eating our favourite sweets or junk food? No--what is important is eating those things in moderation and trying to incorporate healthy foods in our everyday diet.

If you have any questions concerning your dietary habits or your health, do not hesitate to reach out to your health care provider.

Quick Tips!

What are small things you can implement in your day to day life?

- Eat at regular intervals
- Stay hydrated (with water)
- Add more fruits and veggies to your meals
- Replace processed foods with fresh ingredients ☐

– Gabrielle Lesage

Visit amiquebec.org/sources for references

SUMMER 2026

Online Support Groups

For details visit amiquebec.org/support

Mondays 6:30-8pm on Google Meet

For family, friends, and people with mental illness unless otherwise indicated.

ANXIETY/OCD

July 27; August 17

BIPOLAR DISORDER

July 27; August 17

DEPRESSION

June 15; July 13; August 10

HOARDING

June 22; July 13; August 10

QUEER GROUP

June 22; July 13; August 10

YOUNG ADULTS aged 18-35

June 15; July 27; August 17

FAMILY AND FRIENDS for relatives and friends

July 13; August 10

BPD for relatives and friends and SPOUSES AND PARTNERS

Held along with Family & Friends group: July 13; August 10

Both groups will return in September

KALEIDOSCOPE for people living with mental illness

June 22; July 27; August 17

IN PERSON

SOUTH SHORE for relatives and friends

In person only at 91 Churchill Blvd, Greenfield Park

Mondays 6:30-8pm

June 15; July 6; August 17

**Our workshops
will return in the fall!**

**Visit amiquebec.org/workshops for
our Process Group and
Caregiver Groups**

**Visit amiquebec.org/calendar for an always
up-to-date version of our calendar.**

AMI'S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND AWARDS

Meet our board!
amiquebec.org
/board

On June 9th, we welcomed 48 people in person to our Annual General Meeting and awards. The awards in particular were heartwarming—a celebration both of the recipients' achievements and of AMI's impact on our community. Read on to meet our award recipients!

SHARLEEN YOUNG — Volunteer of the Year

This award is presented to an AMI volunteer "for service during the previous twelve months that far exceeded the norm as well as for outstanding and inspiring dedication to our objectives".

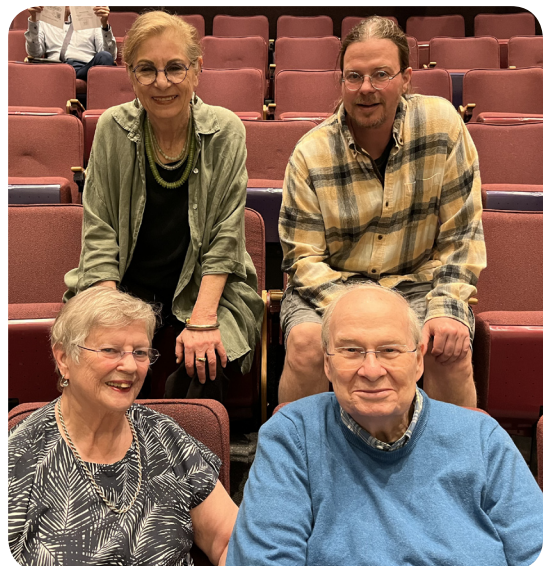
It is hard to find a description that better illustrates Sharleen's contribution to AMI and its members, not only in the last year but for much longer. It is especially in recent times that Sharleen has taken an increasing role by mentoring young support group facilitators, sharing her experience and wisdom, and helping to create a community of belonging. She has joined committees and is taking an active role not only in sustaining our work but in allowing us to explore and experiment with new possibilities. This is a testimony to Sharleen's interest, commitment, and care!



Our volunteer of the year (and many other years!) Sharleen

JUDY AND LYNN ROSS — Special Recognition

Back in the early 2000s, in the absence of support services for English speaking families affected by mental health challenges in the Eastern Townships, Judy and Lynn Ross discovered AMI-Quebec and started to make regular pilgrimages to our programs. It didn't take long before their personal experience and the experience they gathered at AMI became the impetus for the creation of Mental Health Estrie in 2005. From a modest beginning with the goal of closing the gaps and addressing the needs of people with mental health challenges and their families, Mental Health Estrie evolved to become a principal address for the English-speaking community in the Eastern Townships. Judy and Lynn's leadership, commitment, determination and tenacity have made Mental Health Estrie what it is today, 20 years after they planted the seeds. They should be proud of their accomplishments and of their legacy.



Judy and Lynn Ross with their son Tim and AMI's executive director Ella Amir

KYLE ROUGEAU — Extra Mile Award



Kyle with AMI's outreach coordinator, Tony

correcting often erroneous perceptions of mental illness. Tony, AMI's outreach coordinator, says it would be impossible to say just how impactful Kyle has been by trusting and inviting us into his classrooms, helping to inform and educate on a subject matter often misunderstood and feared. The Extra Mile Award is a recognition of his ongoing interest and efforts, as well as his friendship and collaboration.

Kyle first reached out to AMI in 2018 to coordinate presentations at Lakeside Academy, and has single-handedly coordinated over 200 presentations for his students. He has given AMI the opportunity to speak with well over 3,000 students in that period, helping us in a tangible way to reach out to youth and increase their awareness of mental health challenges, challenging and

Read our Annual Report

Visit amiquebec.org/annual-report

LOURDES RODRIGUEZ DEL BARRIO — The 2025 Ella Amir Award for Innovations in Mental Health

As the director of l'Équipe de recherche et d'action en santé mentale et culture (ÉRASME), Lourdes is working hard to introduce Open Dialogue in Quebec. This is a demonstration of forward thinking, and of the recognition that our mental healthcare requires attention. The implementation of the Open Dialogue model on a large scale is a tall order that may take a long time, but its philosophical outlook could and should be gradually integrated into the existing system. This can help to offer more humane, respectful and effective care. Lourdes' conviction, determination and proactive approach are the reason she was selected as the recipient of this award.



Lourdes (left) sharing a laugh with colleague Lisa Benisty

JULIEN GENDRON-TARDIF — Extra Mile Award

While many organizations continue to demand reform to improve care, it is the cries of family members like Julien Gendron-Tardif



Julien with his partner Laurence

which are most heartbreaking but possibly most effective. While mourning the death of his mother and the painful descent of his brother into mental illness, Julien demonstrated heroic behaviour when, days before the court hearing of his brother, he wrote an open letter in La Presse, describing how the tragedy had torn his life apart and how his brother had fallen through the cracks in the mental healthcare system. His proactive and vocal efforts are contributing to help correct the wrongs in mental health care.

which are most heartbreaking but possibly most effective. While mourning the death of his mother and the painful descent of his brother into mental illness, Julien demonstrated heroic behaviour when, days before the court hearing of his brother, he wrote an open letter in La Presse, describing how the tragedy had

GERARDO VARELA and VLADIMIR MICHEL — Special Recognition

Gerardo and Vladimir were nurses at the Douglas Hospital on the psychiatric ward when Aviva was cared for in the hospital. Vladimir has since returned to his studies, and Gerardo continues to offer his support at the Douglas. The caring and compassion they exercised in their work were exemplary! They should be models for anyone caring for people experiencing mental health crises and challenges.



Gerardo enjoying the sun (Vladimir was unfortunately unable to attend)

“Gerardo and Vladimir have essential qualities—they both have compassion and insight—but mostly these qualities translate into their daily action; they truly excel in their positions at the Douglas Hospital. They are utmost examples of the care, I as a client, and my parents as caregivers, would expect from each member of a psychiatric team in our hospital settings.” – Aviva

TRACOM — AMI-Quebec Award for Exemplary Service in the Field of Mental Health

For almost forty years, Tracom has been at the forefront of the community, helping to reduce overcrowding in hospital emergency rooms by offering short-term crisis housing and the support required to regain stability. The goal of psychosocial crisis intervention services to adult clients is aimed at helping to restore a state of healthy functioning and improve quality of life. Recognizing the challenges families often go through when a loved one is in crisis is demonstrated in Tracom's sensitivity and support for families. Tracom has been avant-garde in their approach, long before such support was integrated into the public healthcare system.



Hugues Laforce, the dedicated directeur of Tracom

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amiquebec.org

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Sign up for our monthly emails:

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514-486-1448

(1-877-303-0264 outside Montreal)

info@amiquebec.org

Some paths in life feel destined. For me, working as a counsellor at AMI-Québec is one of them.

I have been a caregiver for my mother from a young age. For many years, I knew about AMI-Québec, yet like many caregivers I meet today, I didn't believe I needed support. I thought I was managing, that it was my loved one who needed help, not me.

My understanding of how much I was carrying began to shift when I started training at the Tamalpa Institute in movement-based expressive arts therapy. Through this program, I discovered how embodied practices and creative expression can help us connect with our lived experience, access inner resources, and make meaning of the stories we hold in our bodies. As I was completing my training, I was invited to reflect on how I wanted to bring this work into my community. I immediately thought of caregivers, and of AMI-Québec as an ideal organization.

Last June, that vision came full circle when I began working here as a counsellor. It felt deeply meaningful to transform

MEET SARAH

AMI's newest counsellor



my personal experiences and professional training into the kind of support I wish I had when I was younger. Today, through the SOS-Famille program, I support individuals in exploring their caregiving roles

and relational dynamics, accessing community resources, and developing tools to navigate the complexities of their realities. I also integrate embodied practices that encourage self-reflection, emotional awareness, and nervous system regulation. Recently, I facilitated AMI-Québec's first movement-based expressive arts therapy workshop, where participants were invited to explore their inner landscapes and reconnect with a sense of agency, creativity, and possibility.

Caregiving can become a constant outward focus, where one's own needs, identity, and dreams are gradually set aside. Through my work as a counsellor and workshop facilitator, I aim not only to support people in their roles as caregivers, but to help them remember the parts of themselves they have forgotten along the way. Sometimes, all it takes is a small shift, a breath, a new insight, a moment of feeling truly seen and present within oneself again and from there, something new can begin. □

– Sarah Varichon

Reducing language barriers in health care

Providing medical care in a language a patient is comfortable in isn't a question of preference: there can be serious consequences. When there's a language barrier, it's much more difficult for a patient to communicate; to understand and to be understood. Patients are less likely to follow treatment plans and trust professionals. When discussing mental health, an already difficult conversation becomes much more complicated if a patient is attempting to have it in a language where they cannot properly express their feelings, or understand the responses.

After a series of public hearings, the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages recommended that language barriers in health care be reduced. They concluded that language rights must be protected to help build a stronger Canada, and this should include being able to receive health services in the official language of the patient's choice.

The Committee determined that to help federal institutions achieve better outcomes, a plan would need to be put in place that would be tailored to the needs of official language minority communities. The population's language needs should be considered

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WALK WITH US EVERY TUESDAY!



Our **weekly walking group** is up and running...er... walking again! This year we've got some special incentives to motivate you to walk with us and on your own. Join us every Tuesday at 4:30pm sharp at the AMI office (5800 Decarie, Montreal)—all abilities welcome. Visit amiquebec.org/walk for details.

How to cope with SIMPLE TASKS



IN TOUGH TIMES

When you are going through any situation of high stress, accomplishing even simple tasks can feel overwhelming. This can be why people dealing with mental health challenges or who are preoccupied by their caregiving responsibilities can find it hard to manage day to day tasks.

There are some ways to make everyday tasks that feel Goliath-like more doable:

- **Start small:** Staying organized with a to-do list can be great, until the list grows so long that even looking at it is daunting. One way to overcome this is to complete the simplest item on the list and reward yourself with the satisfaction of completing it and getting the ball rolling. This can include making the to-do list itself, or a task that you may sort of enjoy, like taking your dog on a walk.
- **Set attainable goals:** When your house looks messy, you may feel ashamed and feel the need to tackle all of it at once. This can be an impractical ambition that sets you up to fail. Give yourself a more manageable task to start. It is also important to customize tasks to fit personal needs and meet you where you are: if doing all the dishes feels impossible, start by just making sure your favourite mug is clean and ready for your morning coffee.
- **Ask for help:** There is strength in knowing when you need some support. Try to identify friends or family that can help you. Leaning on others can help you accomplish more and the associated social interaction can also help in many ways.
- **Ditch the 'all-or-nothing' mentality:** Avoid categorizing situations in extreme and absolute terms: rarely is anything a total success or a complete failure. You can start whenever and do as much as you can. You can also restart, retry, or adapt your tasks to fit your needs and abilities.
- **Give yourself some grace:** It is important in moments of struggle to remember that you can choose how you view the situation and move forward. You are capable of overcoming these moments, but start with being kind and patient to yourself during the low moments.

- **Reward your efforts:** If you were not able to take a shower, but you managed to brush your teeth, that is commendable! It may feel silly to pat yourself on the back for tasks you once did so easily but your ability to adapt and survive painful experiences is a victory worth celebrating. ☐

—Nazila Tolooei

Visit amiquebec.org/sources for references

WELL NEST INVITES YOU TO A

Summer Party

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Lemonade stand
snacks
and maybe dancing!!

5 TO 7 PM THURSDAY

JULY 23

5800 BOUL. DÉCARIE, MONTRÉAL, H3X 2J5

amiquebec.org/well-nest

amiquébec
Alliés en santé mentale
Allies in mental health

On July 23rd, we'll be honouring summer with a **good ol' LEMONADE STAND** — not just your typical lemonade stand, but a **MULTIPLE flavoured lemonade stand!**

As you sip this refreshing drink, you'll also be able to enjoy the talents of our very own DJ Val, who'll make sure to shower us with **lively and festive music** everyone can move to. Rain or shine, we'll be celebrating!

Visit amiquebec.org/well-nest to sign up for reminders.

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Allié.e.s en santé mentale
Allies in mental health

AMI-Québec, a grassroots not-for-profit organization, is committed to helping carers* manage the effects of mental illness through support, education, guidance and advocacy. By promoting understanding, we work to dispel the stigma still surrounding mental illness, thereby helping to create communities that offer new hope for meaningful lives.

*Carers (*proches aidants*) are those in the circle of care, including family members and other significant people, who provide unpaid support to a person in need.

Perla Muya, *President*
Norman Segalowitz, *Vice President*
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SHARE & CARE

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Articles and comments are invited. Anonymity will be respected if requested. Guest articles reflect the opinions of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of AMI-Québec.

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Language Barriers ... continued from page 6

when planning new technologies or when considering privatization practices within health care. Services of equal quality should be offered in both official languages, and there should be consultations with official language minority communities.

The Senate of Canada is asking the federal government to review some of its practices to better align needs and delivery, and this includes language objectives. This would also involve a regulatory framework where the requirements for official languages minority communities are clearly defined. Collaboration from all health partners, including the federal government, is needed to provide health services in the minority language in a way that is strategic and organized in order to ensure that all Canadians have access to health services in their official language.

Among the recommendations is a government-wide strategy that would enhance support for minority language community organizations. It would involve mechanisms that would provide multi-year, stable funding. This is essential for organizations such as AMI-Quebec, which is one of very few providers of mental health services for family carers in English in Quebec.

Receiving health and social services in a patient's preferred language ensures understanding and effective communication. Language barriers can complicate medical care and can even be dangerous. Being treated in the patient's own language and increases the probability of a better outcome. □

– Emily Verrall

Visit amiquebec.org/sources for references

This issue of *Share&Care* has been made possible by a grant from the Otsuka-Lundbeck Alliance.



YOUR SUPPORT HELPS SUSTAIN OUR FREE PROGRAMS

Although AMI receives some government funding, we work hard to raise more than half of our operating budget each year.

Thank you for your support!

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