



MED • VET • NET NEWS

Volume 3, Issue 2

February 2006

In this newsletter we give a summary of the achievements of Med-Vet-Net during the first year, with particular emphasis on the role of the overarching Workpackages.

The Project management team tell us about a recent visit to the ECDC and the Administration Bureau update us with information about the electronic tool study.

We also have a report from the recent Microbial Risk Assessment workshop and a call for expressions of interest for our second Science Communications Internship.

Med-Vet-Net Communications Unit

The Overarching Workpackages

Continuing Med-Vet-Net Integration Activities – the Overarching Workpackages

The achievements of Med-Vet-Net during the first eighteen months were rated by the external referee appointed by the EC as good-to-excellent. Much of this success was attributable to the three overarching Workpackages which have undertaken the bulk of the integration activities including the scientific management, administration/finance and communication. These activities are implemented in:

- Workpackage 1: Virtual Institute Structure and Management
- Workpackage 2: Strategic Integration
- Workpackage 3: Spreading Excellence

Each of these Workpackages will continue throughout the 5 years of the network's activities.

Workpackage 1: Virtual Institute Structure and Management

Led by Co-ordinator's Representative Dr Andre Jestin, Workpackage 1 will continue to be responsible for the administrative, financial and legal (including gender-related) aspects of the network. The majority of this work is undertaken by the Administration Bureau, the establishment of which has been essential to the development of the network. The Administration Bureau has put into place sustainable management-based mechanisms, procedures and processes to establish Med-Vet-Net as a "Virtual Institute". A significant proportion of the first years' activities have been associated with implementation of the management structure and improving the efficiency, flexibility and reporting of

project finances and especially establishing good working relationships with the financial officers of the partners and of the EC. In this year, Workpackage 1 will aim to maintain and stabilise the "Virtual Institute" management structure with the long-term objective of network sustainability particularly by developing an independent legal status for the network and by supporting opportunities for further funding. In collaboration with Workpackage 3, they will also aim to enhance remote communications by exploitation of modern, especially electronic tools.

Workpackage 2: Strategic Integration

Led by the Project Director Diane Newell, Workpackage 2 is responsible for the delivery by the network of effective and strategic, integrated scientific research. This objective is supported by a project management team, the Co-ordinating Forum, which comprises representatives from each institute and from each scientific thematic area (Epidemiology, Host-Microbe Interactions, Detection and Control, and Risk Research).

The tasks of Workpackage 2 include

- strategic planning and co-ordination of scientific research
- development of research skills and expertise
- inter-network scientific communications
- expansion and extension of network expertise, knowledge and facilities by external collaboration.

One major task of the first year was to review the state-of-art of research in the network and then establish a five-year Strategic Scientific Plan utilising the skills and expertise of representatives from each partner. Based on this plan a research programme was developed and research Workpackages commissioned to start in March 2006. In addition, the Workpackage has supported an extensive training programme including short-term missions and Workshops. It has also collaborated with Workpackage 3 to develop inter-network communications, especially highly successful Annual Scientific Meeting in Winchester attended by nearly 200 Med-Vet-Net delegates. Finally, Workpackage 2 has successfully expanded network collaborations to foster contacts throughout the world and raise awareness of network activities with other zoonoses-related networks. In particular, informal associations were made with groups in Australia and New Zealand and in November 2005 EUUS SAFEFOOD was funded. This transatlantic network on food safety, will provide opportunities for joint meetings and short term missions over the next three years.

In this coming year, Workpackage 2 will continue to deliver a high quality research programme consistent with Med-Vet-Net's strategic science plan, institute aims and objectives and EC requirements. Developing the skills and expertise will remain an

important activity but particular focus will be on cross-disciplinary technologies and project management at the European level.

One new strategy will be to provide an environment for the development, management and dissemination of knowledge in critical areas such as new and neglected zoonotic pathogens using Special Interest Groups. Finally, the Workpackage will aim to establish a more inclusive associate/collaborative research network at the European level



Overarching Co-ordination

in particular by opening up Workpackage activities, where possible, to external scientists and by inclusion of external delegates in the Annual Scientific Meetings.

Workpackage 3: Spreading Excellence

Led by the Institute Representative of the Society for Applied Microbiology (SfAM), Professor Peter Silley, Workpackage 3 is responsible for spreading the excellence of knowledge encompassed within Med-Vet-Net. Communication is to scientists within the network as well as externally to the general public, stakeholders outside of the core network partners and the international scientific community. This has been achieved through the formation of a Communications Unit, based at the Society for Applied Microbiology. This unit uses the most effective mechanisms to deliver and share Med-Vet-Net information through the web – through the development of public and members websites - television, radio and the press. The Communications Unit has established visual guidelines and produced publicity material including brochures and exhibition stands which are available for communications use by each of the 16 partner institutes. The monthly newsletter you are reading is published on the public website and various articles have appeared in magazine and trade journals. A development programme for 'Science Communicators' was successfully completed at the end of 2005 training two students in Science Communication. The strategies adopted have been remarkably successful in raising the profile of Med-Vet-Net both internationally and within Europe. Also, awareness of the network at governmental and non-governmental policy-maker levels is significant throughout Europe, but particularly in the UK, Denmark and the Netherlands. In this coming year, the Workpackage will focus on a greater involvement of stakeholders by expansion of the Communications Unit activities especially the public website, publication of science stories and the production of a "glossy magazine". They will also develop and enhance the Science Communications training programme.

Looking to the Future

In this first 18 months so much has been achieved and we should naturally all feel very proud of our hard work. These achievements would not have been possible were it not for the harmonious collaboration of the three overarching Workpackages. However, the network is still young and there is much to do to meet our long-term goal of effectively integrating European research on the prevention and control of zoonotic diseases.

Lucy Harper



Med-Vet-Net People

Dr John Threlfall - Institute Representative for the Health Protection Agency (HPA), UK.

John is a Consultant Clinical Scientist and is currently Acting Director of the HPA Centre for Infections Laboratory of Enteric Pathogens (LEP).

John has worked in the HPA (formerly Public Health Laboratory Service - PHLS) in the field of gastrointestinal pathogens for over 30 years, since being awarded a PhD in Microbial Genetics in from the University of Leicester. His current responsibilities include Chair of the HPA / Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA) Foodborne Zoonoses Steering Group, representative for the HPA on the Defra Microbial Antibiotic Resistance Co-ordination Group (DARC), co-ordinator of the HPA / VLA Scientific Liaison Group, and national representative for England and Wales on the European Union Enternet project. He is also HPA representative for England and Wales on the Defra Standardisation of Veterinary Laboratory Tests Working Party, scientific co-ordinator for the HPA for Med-Vet-Net, and is a member of the HPA Gastrointestinal Programmes Board with particular responsibility for Salmonella. He also acted for three years, from 2000-03, as R&D co-ordinator for Central Public Health Laboratory (CPHL) and is currently lead person for the HPA on four jointly funded posts with the VLA.

John's role in co-ordinating HPA activities with the VLA has opened up many new joint areas of research in gastrointestinal infections between the two organisations and in particular, in several work-packages within Med-Vet-Net.



Dr John Threlfall

REPORT - MRA Course, Bilthoven

The microbial risk assessment (MRA) course at the National Institute of Public Health and the Environment (RIVM), Bilthoven, Netherlands (5°C on 31 January), found chilled scientists from the South of Europe (15°C in Rome, 12°C in Madrid) meeting more comfortable participants from the North of Europe (-2°C in Warsaw, -5°C in Uppsala). The preliminary introduction of the group revealed that everyone had vast scientific expertise and long-term experience, mostly in the field of food safety. There was, however, a large variation in the scientific background of participants - from veterinary epidemiologists working in veterinary food safety assessment for many years, to bacteriologists and epidemiologists from public health institutes with limited experience in foodborne zoonoses research. This group variability made the course extremely challenging for the organisers.

The course was carried out in the modern facilities of RIVM, in a room equipped with 12 computers and a full array of conference equipment. Teachers were well prepared and presented concepts in a clear and organised way. With a watch in their hand, Emma Snary, Arie Havelaar, and Danilo Lo Fo Wong revealed their knowledge on risk assessment methods. During the evenings, there was no mercy: we had no choice but to participate in a rich cultural programme! On Day one we consumed seafood, and on Day two we

visited a museum of street organs and a Dutch-Indonesian restaurant. While walking to the museum, one of the participants was separated from the group and found herself alone in hostile night-time Utrecht. Fortunately, she found the way back to the group by asking the friendly local people the way to the museum. Once again, Dutch society illustrated its high culture and widespread knowledge of the English language.

The course was organised into lectures explaining the theory of MRA, followed by practical exercises of previously presented concepts. Group exercises provided an opportunity to use the MRA tools and consult the experts as required. Every group analysed one of the pre-selected food safety topics, eg: "What is the risk of human being infected with *Listeria* due to the consumption of French pâté?" During the final session, groups presented results of their analyses. The presentations showed that we had taken in the information presented to us and we now know how to address MRA analysis. For some of us it was a very helpful first time approach to MRA, being sometimes a little too technical and difficult to understand. For those more experienced it may have been too basic. I believe, however, that nobody who left Bilthoven with a notion that these three days were time wasted. That's why we would like to thank Emma, Arie and Danilo who devoted a lot of their precious time to organising this great course and seed the MRA germ throughout European veterinary and medical institutions.

Pawel Stefanoff

National Institute of Hygiene, Poland (PZH)

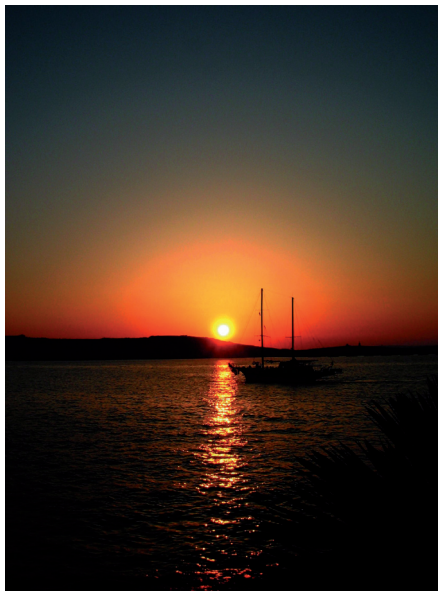
Annual Meeting Malta 2006

On the 3 May 2006 Med-Vet-Net launches its second annual conference. This year the conference is to be hosted on the tiny sunny island of Malta. For those of you who are unsure about Malta's location, it is situated in the southern Mediterranean close to Sicily and the coast of North Africa. The island has an abundance of well-kept historic secrets above and below the waterline. We encourage you to take the opportunity to visit some of these attractions whilst you are in Malta.

The scientific structure of this year's conference will focus on four main topic areas including detection and control, epidemiology and risk research, host-microbe interactions and microbial ecology and new, emerging and neglected zoonoses. This year we want to utilise the conference as an opportunity to showcase scientific findings funded by, or associated with, Med-Vet-Net. There will be plenty of opportunity for delegates to talk about their work, with up to 70 presentation spaces supported within parallel presentations spread over the four day conference. Additionally, we hope to make the most of the conference as an occasion to attract external participation from the scientific community outside of the network partnership and outside of the partner countries. We are very excited by the prospect of talks by several keynote speakers over the four conference days. We have invited a diversity of speakers from many different disciplines. These speakers include Mark Woolhouse, Patricia Smith, Gadi Frankel, Scott McEwan and Jean-Pierre Kraehenbuhl.

Med-Vet-Net anticipate fully supporting 100 participants from the network partner institutes to attend this conference. We are also offering subsidised rates for up to three additional participants from each institute. We are hoping to attract participation from up to 100 external delegates from the European scientific community. Details of this meeting have been circulated to all the institute representatives. We have also provided the institute representatives with guidelines which we hope will answer some of the more common questions that may arise. Our website was set up by our Science Communication interns and gives a comprehensive general overview of information likely to be helpful for all delegates. Please visit the conference website at http://www.medvetnet.org/mvn_conf06/ for registration and abstract submission details. Should you require further information or assistance please contact the organising committee at mvnconf06@medvetnet.org.

Claire Cassar



Malta at sunset

Project Management

Visit to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)

Med-Vet-Net has a continuing commitment to advise our stakeholders such as ECDC and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). ECDC is a newly formed EU agency that has been created to help strengthen Europe's defences against infectious diseases. It is now just over one year since ECDC was formed. In March, the Director, Mrs Zsuzsanna Jakab, took up her position and in December 2004, we were pleased to announce that ECDC had agreed to appoint Dr Andrea Ammon, Head of the Unit for Surveillance and Communication, as an observer on the Med-Vet-Net Advisory Panel. Dr Ammon is well known to many of us and was previously the State Epidemiologist for Germany. More information on ECDC can be found at www.ecdc.eu.int.

This month Mrs Jakab kindly invited Med-Vet-Net representatives (André Jestin and Diane Newell) to present the network activities. We were also able to discuss opportunities for future collaboration with Dr Ammon. Areas of discussion and common interest included potential joint training courses, science communication training, and ECDC involvement in some of the research Workpackages. Over the next few months, the joint Governing Board and Co-ordinating Forum subcommittee on collaboration with ECDC and EFSA will continue to develop communication with these agencies in co-operation with DG Research colleagues and we will look forward to the participation of our ECDC and EFSA observers in our activities.

Training courses

Development of scientific expertise and skills is a major objective of Med-Vet-Net and is part of the development of research skills and expertise task of Workpackage 2. This sub-workpackage is led by Henrik

Wagener (DFVF) supported by the Training Subcommittee.

This month has seen the start of our training course and workshop programme with courses completed on Pulsed Field Gel Electrophoresis (PFGE) typing, Epidemiology for New and Candidate Member States and Microbial Risk Assessment. Next month will see the completion of the current programme with a training course on Salmonella in Poultry for which there are still places (<http://www.medvetnet.org/cms/templates/doc.php?id=57&searchstring=workshop>).

The PFGE course had 15 students from Med-Vet-Net and PulseNet Europe institutes. The five day course was held 6-10 February at the HPA Colindale, London, and was organised by Susanna Lukinmaa (SSI) with trainers from Denmark and Scotland. The course was a resounding success despite the local organiser John Threlfall breaking his foot in a car accident the weekend before the meeting. Get well soon John!

The training course on Microbial Risk Assessment was held at RIVM, the Netherlands on the 1-3 February and was jointly organised by Emma Snary (VLA), Danilo Lo Fo Wong (DFVF) and Arie Havelaar (RIVM). The course was extremely popular and all 20 places were quickly filled from the Med-Vet-Net partner institutes. Preliminary analysis of the course by the students indicated that it was an excellent practical introduction to the methods used for risk assessment (see page 2 for full report).

The third completed training course was targeted at a completely different audience and focussed on the Med-Vet-Net objective to disseminate accrued knowledge and skills to external scientists throughout Europe. This workshop was jointly organised by Med-Vet-Net and GlobalSalmSurv (GSS) and was held in PZH, Poland. The course organisers were Danilo Lo Fo Wong (DFVF) and Fred Angulo (CDC, USA), and Katarzyna Pancer (PZH) did an excellent job as the local organiser. The workshop aimed to provide an understanding of the epidemiology of foodborne pathogens, particularly *Salmonella*, to human and veterinary epidemiologists from new and candidate EU member states. There were 48 delegates from 16 countries. Trainers were imported from the USA, Denmark, Canada and the Netherlands and additional lectures were given by several speakers including those from ECDC and EFSA. I attended the first day of this workshop and was impressed by the level of training and the enthusiasm of the delegates.

For all these courses the excellence of the organisation was clear. Such organisation takes a lot of hard work and time. It is the intention of all organisers that further information on the course content, and what we have learnt from these experiences, will be published in future newsletters or on the website. In the meantime our sincere thanks go to all of them for their successful efforts.

Diane Newell



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EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

SCIENCE COMMUNICATION INTERNSHIP

September - November 2006

As part of its overarching 'Spreading Excellence' Workpackage 3, Med-Vet-Net is offering four positions for a Science Communication Internship. The Internship is open to any current student, researcher or staff member of the Med-Vet-Net partner institutes. The Internship will consist of a 3-month period of full-time training / tutorials in various aspects science communication including:

- Communicating with government and industry
- Communicating with the media
- Presentation skills
- Internet and website design
- Writing skills and publications
- Communicating with the public and children
- Organising events and exhibitions



Following completion of the 3-month period, it is expected that participants will return to their Institute and apply the skills learnt by communicating the work of Med-Vet-Net in their country, as well as assisting the Med-Vet-Net Communications Unit with the dissemination of information throughout Europe.

During the Internship, the candidates will be mainly located for 12 weeks at the offices of the Society for Applied Microbiology in Bedford, UK, with some additional travel throughout Europe to other partner institutes and Brussels. Accommodation, travel and associated expenses will be provided.

It is anticipated that the second 3-month Internship will run from September - November 2006.

Please send expressions of interest to Teresa Belcher (contact details at the end of this newsletter)

Admin Bureau Update

Last month of the first round of Workpackages

This month, the scientific activities for Workpackages 5, and 7-14 will finish and the financial accounts for these workpackages closed. This will complete an internal cycle for the Admin Bureau and the financial officers of all the partners involved in these workpackages. Many lessons have been learnt from this cycle to provide the network with a safe financial environment; in particular the need to maintain awareness of the allocation and use of funds throughout the network. This has involved considerable discussion with the partners, the introduction of flexibility into the financial management, and a continuous dialogue with the EC financial officers. In March, eleven new workpackages will start which are bound to introduce

new challenges to the systems we have developed, but given the co-operation of our partner financial officers, we are confident that the network financial resources will be efficiently managed.

3rd meeting of the network on gender aspects in food quality and safety research

On 10 February 2006, a meeting on Gender aspects for EU-funded projects in Food Quality and Safety, was held at the Research Directorate General at Brussels. Maya Goepfert of the Admin Bureau represents Med-Vet-Net in this group. The aim of this group is to exchange views regarding women's participation in EU-funded research, and to share updated information regarding local, regional, national and international initiatives to promote women in research.

Electronic tools study

On 23 February 2006, an investigation of available electronic tools to improve remote communications

and collaboration between partners throughout the network will be started commissioned jointly by Workpackages 1 and 3. Following a call for tender the consultancy company, Telindus-Arche, have been appointed to carry out this investigation. This company is a leading European Information Technology Consultancy, with offices all over Europe.

The task of the consultants will be assisted, monitored and followed-up by Workpackages 1 and 3 through a series of meetings. The partners will be asked to contribute to discussions related to the issues and problems associated with remote collaboration.

Initially, the investigation will assess current methods of, and needs for, networking within Med-Vet-Net, through interviews with key scientists and managers. Thereafter, the consultants will make recommendations to the Co-ordinating Forum and Governing Board for methods and tools to improve remote communications.

Admin Bureau

External Congress

The International Conference on Emerging Infectious Diseases, Atlanta, Georgia, USA 19-22 March 2006

The International Conference on Emerging Infectious Diseases was first convened in 1998; ICEID 2006 marks its fifth occurrence. The conference brings together public health professional to encourage the exchange of scientific and public health information on global emerging infectious disease issues. The program will include plenary and panel sessions with invited speakers as well as oral and poster presentations on emerging infections. Major topics include current work on surveillance, epidemiology, research, communication and training, bioterrorism, and preventions and control of emerging infectious diseases, both in the United States and abroad. Major subjects covered will include:

- Antimicrobial Resistance
- Bioterrorism and Preparedness
- Foodborne and Waterborne Illnesses
- Global Health
- Molecular Diagnostics and Epidemiology
- Nosocomial Infections
- Socio-economic and Political Factors
- Vectorborne Diseases
- Zoonotic Diseases

Please visit <http://www.iceid.org>

International Symposium on Emerging Zoonoses, Atlanta, Georgia, USA 22-24 March 2006

This symposium is being held in conjunction with the ICEID (see above). As public health and animal health organizations attempt to respond to a new era of emerging and re-emerging zoonotic diseases, their ability and skill in forming new strategic partnerships will be paramount. Episodes of emerging zoonoses are being increasingly recognized around the world and the confluence of people, animals and animal products today is unprecedented. This Symposium will bring together public health and animal health professionals to strengthen the development of effective and co-operative partnerships to face of new microbial threats. The program will include plenary sessions with 40 invited speakers from around the world. Major themes of the Symposium include:

- The convergence of human and animal health
- Threats and challenges facing human and animal health
- Lessons learned from the past
- Opportunities for the future
- Risk management and Communication

For more information please visit: <http://www.isezconference.org/>

Infectious Disease Research Network (IDRN) Courses in Methods in Molecular Microbiology Royal Free & University College Medical School, Hampstead Campus, London 24 March-3 April 2006

The course will include a day of practical demonstrations as an introduction to basic molecular techniques for medical microbiology, a three day hands on course

using essential molecular methods, and a one day seminar series on the application of molecular techniques in infectious diseases. Please visit: <http://www.idrn.org/researchworkshops.php>

International Symposium on Salmonella and Salmonellosis Saint Malo, France 10-12 May 2006

Major themes of the symposium include:

- Detection, identification, typing
- Interactions between hosts and bacteria
- Immune response
- Ecology and animal epidemiology
- Ecology and public health
- Antimicrobial resistance
- Control and risk assessment

Please visit : http://www.zoopole.com/ispaia/i3s2006/org_en.php

Third International Conference on Antimicrobial Agents in Veterinary Medicine (AAVM) Orlando, Florida, USA 16-20 May 2006

The topics of the meeting are:

- Pharmacokinetics and Pharmacodynamics
- Antimicrobial susceptibility and resistance
- Clinical research and therapy
- Antibiotic treatment of mastitis
- Analytical methods and techniques
- Environment, food safety and regulatory aspects
- Future of antimicrobial therapy

Please visit: <http://www.aavm2006.com>

106th General Meeting of the American Society for Microbiology Orlando, USA 21-25 May 2006

This conference will be held in the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando. The scientific program will feature nearly 300 individual colloquia, symposia, roundtable discussions, award lectures, and poster sessions. For more information please visit: <http://www.gm.asm.org/7200.shtm>

4th International Veterinary Vaccines and Diagnostics Conference (IVVDC) Oslo, Norway 25-26 June 2006

The conference provides an excellent opportunity to meet colleagues and be updated on recent progress and future perspectives in the fields of vaccinology and diagnostics. The IVVDC has become an important meeting place for regulatory authorities, pharmaceutical companies and the scientific community. Please visit: http://www.vetinst.no/inet_eng/index.asp?strUrl=1002147i&topExpand=&subExpand=

7th International Workshop on Pathogenesis and Host Response in Helicobacter Infection. LO-skolen, Helsingør, Denmark. 1-4 July 2006

The European study group on pathogenesis and immunology in helicobacter infections and the European helicobacter study group would like to invite you to this meeting. The 2006 workshop in Helsingør will also deal with:

- new *Helicobacter* species;
- experimental animal models;
- molecular genetics, pathogenesis;
- virulence factors;

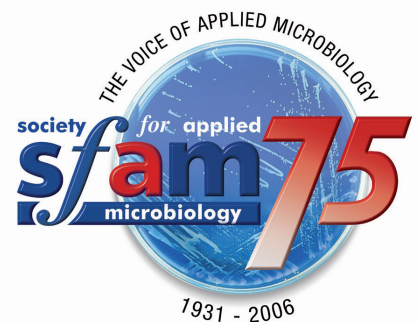
- molecular mechanisms and inflammation;
- basic mechanisms of helicobacters and probiotics;
- humoral and cellular immune responses in gastric and extragastric *Helicobacter* infections.

Living together: Polymicrobial Communities Society for Applied Microbiology 75th Anniversary Summer Conference Edinburgh, Scotland 3-6 July 2006

This conference has a packed scientific programme including sessions on:

- Physiology of polymicrobial communities
- Influencing polymicrobial communities
- Gut microflora
- Bioremediation

Poster and oral submissions welcome (not restricted to topic of meeting). Abstracts should reach the Society office before 28 April 2006. There will be a session dedicated to students on 'Making good use of your supervisor'. There is also full social programme including a quiz night, trade show and conference dinner at the prestigious Hub restaurant on the Royal Mile. To book online and for full programme details please visit: <http://www.sfam.org.uk/sumconf.php>



CONTACT US

Med-Vet-Net News is published monthly by the Med-Vet-Net Communications Unit.
Editors: Teresa Belcher and Lucy Harper
Email: communications@medvetnet.org
Ph: +44 (0)1234 271020
Fax: +44 (0)1234 271025
Postal Address:
Society for Applied Microbiology,
The Blore Tower,
The Harpur Centre,
Bedford, MK20 1TQ, UK
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