Advanced Rehabilitation Research Training Program

Postdoctoral Fellowship Details and Application Guidance



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Introduction



Kessler Foundation—in conjunction with Rutgers New Jersey Medical School and Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation—is pleased to offer the **Advanced Rehabilitation Research Training Program (ARRTP)**, a multidisciplinary training program for postdoctoral candidates in medical rehabilitation research.

Training Future Scientists

This program is designed to train doctoral-level investigators in clinical research that improves rehabilitation outcomes for individuals with physical and cognitive disabilities. The aim is to help individuals with disabilities improve mobility, cognition, quality of life, and to gain employment. Our scientists seek ways to overcome obstacles faced by adults and children who live with brain injury, spinal cord injury, multiple sclerosis, stroke, autism, and other chronic neurological and orthopedic conditions. Researchers also investigate how disabilities affect employment and methods to optimize outcomes.

Who Should Apply?

The Foundation invites applications from individuals with PhDs, MDs, or other

Who Should Apply? cont.

doctoral degrees from a range of biomedical sciences and clinical rehabilitation disciplines such as biomechanics, physiology, psychology, psychiatry, neurology, nursing, physical therapy, and occupational therapy. Candidates in physical medicine and rehabilitation, rehabilitation sciences, and rehabilitation engineering are especially encouraged to apply due to the growing need for research training in these fields.

Program Sponsors

Both federal and non-federal sponsors support **ARRTP** including, for example, the National MS Society, Hearst Foundations, Craig H. Neilsen Foundation, and Kessler Foundation.



The Fellowship and Research Experience

ARRTP offers a comprehensive and immersive training experience designed to equip fellows with the necessary skills and knowledge for advanced rehabilitation research, including these key areas:

- Intensive work and training with a team of experienced mentors. Their expertise spans specialized disciplines relevant to rehabilitation and essential methodological tools. Some fellows will spend up to two-thirds of their time with a single primary mentor who is an exceptionally qualified senior investigator, while others will divide their time among different members of their mentoring team. A mentoring team may include up to three mentors who have significant influence and authority over the fellow's research training plan.
- Formal coursework or directed study to advance knowledge gaps. These activities help fellows develop advanced expertise in rehabilitation, scientific, or medical specialization areas, research design, statistics, and related tools.
- Attendance and participation in conferences, lectures, and seminars. A wealth of educational resources is available to solidify fellows' understanding. Fellows are encouraged to attend conferences, lectures, grand rounds, and CME courses to deepen their understanding of pathophysiology and recovery processes. Educational opportunities are available through Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation, Kessler Foundation, and other institutions across the New Jersey/New York area.

- Research experience in the laboratory or office of more senior investigators.
 Outstanding single-subject areas of study include neuropsychological recovery, neuroscience, mobility and motor function rehabilitation, musculoskeletal biomechanics, neuromuscular and sensorimotor physiology, outcome and effectiveness research, physiatry, functional assessment of spinal cord injury, stroke, and traumatic brain injury.
- Ability to work with mentors from other areas of biomedical and social research.
 While many mentors have deep experience in rehabilitation, others come from different scientific fields like engineering or psychology. These mentors offer fresh ideas and methods that can lead to new and creative research in rehabilitation when they team up with skilled research fellows. This mix of knowledge can help fellows understand complex problems from different points of view and encourages them to think outside the box as they design their own studies and solutions.
- Completion of published research project(s). Successfully finishing research studies that are subsequently documented and made publicly available in academic or scientific journals.

The Fellowship and Research Experience cont.

- Preparation and submission of National Institutes of Health grant application(s).
 This includes exposure to rehabilitation administration and encouragement to participate in a grant-writing project to enable future funding.
- **Self-Direction.** Fellows collaborate with their mentors at the start of the fellowship program to develop a research training plan, which serves as a roadmap for their journey through **ARRTP**. The essence of advanced training is to nurture promising young investigators who will present their own ideas and goals in response to an environment rich in research opportunities.
- **Team building.** Productive rehabilitation research relies on the collaborative efforts of a multidisciplinary team. Successful research fellows will create and work within such teams throughout their careers. A key aspect of **ARRTP** is to provide fellows with formative experiences in building and leading their own research teams.

- **Cross-Training.** PhD and MD fellows will spend time with other PhD rehabilitation scientists as well as clinical researchers to achieve excellence in a specialized area of research. This ensures the research has relevance and enhances the fellow's knowledge of clinical rehabilitation.
- Training beyond institutional boundaries. Though the emphasis of the program includes working with faculty at the Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, fellows are encouraged to seek collaborations with top scientists throughout the New Jersey/New York metropolitan area.

Skill Areas for Emerging Rehabilitation Researchers

Postdoctoral fellows entering the field of rehabilitation research should build skills across the following three key areas during their fellowship:

- 1. Knowledge of biological/disease processes, disablement, and rehabilitation.
 - Understanding the scientific and theoretical foundations of the intervention being studied —such as the neural mechanisms behind behavior—is essential for advancing rehabilitation research. Fellows may take advanced courses or engage in guided readings in areas like neuroanatomy or learning theory. They also need to understand how to assess case severity, disease stage, impairment, disability, and related factors. Fellows with limited experience in clinical rehabilitation observe or participate in relevant settings, such as team conferences, patient interviews, or in-home services for individuals with disabilities.
- 2. Knowledge of statistics, methodology, and research design. All fellows are expected to achieve basic competency in statistics and research design, or to build on existing knowledge during the fellowship. Physician fellows planning a full one- to two-year fellowship who have not completed coursework in these areas are strongly encouraged to take a course in basic biostatistics and research design.

3. Show proficiency in the following:

- How to ask relevant and testable experimental questions (hypothesize)
- Basic research design: The randomized true experiment and common pitfalls investigators may encounter using this method
- Systematic approach to demonstrating observations in single-subject and caseseries reports and appropriate statistical comparisons for these settings

- Strong quasi-experimental designs (e.g., time series) versus weaker ones (e.g., case control, matching, covariance, correlational designs)
- Descriptive and correlational study designs (e.g., cross-sectional); interpretation of descriptive statistical results
- Inference of causality using cohort and retrospective study designs
- Prognosis and prediction (e.g., longitudinal) principles and studies
- Specification of research subjects and sampling techniques
- Principles and methods of functional assessment and measurement, including reliability, precision, and validity
- Application of measurement methods to assess impairment, disability, handicap, and qualities of everyday life
- Evaluation of relevant diagnostic tests
- Sample size and power requirements
- Structure for a planned analysis in a research proposal, including a priori vs. post hoc (e.g., investigations, control procedures and variables)
- Project management and use of consultants (e.g., statistical)
- Organizing a pilot study including pretesting and quality control
- Basic descriptive and inferential statistical principles: Use of IBM® SPSS® Statistics, Stata, or other statistical programs, correlation coefficients, non-parametric statistics, basic Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA)
- Organizing data collection for accuracy and efficient data entry and analysis
- Data cleaning
- Use of databases and secondary analyses



Additional Research Tools and Subjects

Proficiency in the additional refined skills listed below must be demonstrated or acquired during the fellowship. Fellows can address gaps in these skills by attending the fall research course for residents at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, pursuing directed independent study, or enrolling in formal coursework at another institution.

- Scientific writing
- Oral presentation
- Computer use—word processing, database, statistics
- Defining a research question likely to yield productive, testable hypotheses
- Library reference search and computer searches (e.g., Medline)

- Critical review of the scientific literature in a selected area
- Technical skills in equipment and procedures, as needed
- Grant preparation—basic National Institutes of Health formats and processes
- Questionnaire and interview design, choice, and interpretation

Advancing Research Method Skills

Fellows with a solid foundation in basic research methods are encouraged to strengthen their expertise by learning advanced statistical and methodological tools. The choice of additional skills will depend on the focus of their rehabilitation research and may include:

- Advanced research design (e.g., randomized block designs, multiple interrupted time series, regression discontinuity)
- Intermediate statistical methods (e.g., multiple regression, techniques for the analysis of partial variance, classification and regression trees)
- Advanced statistical techniques (e.g., structural equation modeling, LISREL, Poisson regression, and Cox regression)
- Actual secondary analysis of disabilityrelated healthcare databases (e.g., Uniform Data System, National Medical Care Expenditure Survey, and Medicare Provider Analysis and Review)
- Meta-analysis techniques
- Rasch analysis versus traditional factor analysis and test reliability

Didactic Opportunities

In addition to working with the primary mentor, exposure to relevant rehabilitation issues will be ensured by the didactic opportunities offered by various participating departments at each site. These may include monthly grand rounds, physiatry residents' weekly internal rounds, and weekly brain injury rounds. Opportunities to observe direct clinical management of patients are designated through the fellowship committee, which guides the fellows' training program on an individual basis. For example, numerous programs are available for advanced training presented at the following institutions:

Rutgers New Jersey Medical School

Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Department of Neurosciences Department of Radiology

Rutgers University

Psychology Department Center for Molecular and Behavioral Neurosciences

Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation, a Select Medical hospital

Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation is a major affiliate of Kessler Foundation, providing an interdisciplinary approach to physical medicine and rehabilitation. It offers comprehensive inpatient and outpatient services for individuals who have experienced brain injury, spinal cord injury, stroke, amputation, neuromuscular disorders, and musculoskeletal or orthopedic conditions.

The Mentoring Team

The mentoring team adheres to an organized framework tailored for a training program. To form an acceptable mentoring team, fellows must select at least one primary mentor. Complete descriptions of the focus of Kessler Foundation mentors can be found below.

Each mentoring team will be comprised of these structural elements:

• **Primary mentor.** The primary mentor guides a fellow's research and training, offering expertise in a specific rehabilitation area (e.g., traumatic brain injury, stroke, spinal cord injury, autism) or scientific field (e.g., neurophysiology, neuropsychology). The mentor collaborates closely with the fellow on developing the training plan, overseeing research activities, and ensuring the work is grounded in rehabilitative science. Regular weekly meetings, direct support with writing projects, and connections with other researchers and clinicians help ensure the fellow's progress. In some cases, depending on the research area, a team of mentors may share responsibility more equally.



The Mentoring Team cont.

• **Additional mentor(s).** Other mentors contribute specialized knowledge and strategic input to strengthen the fellow's research, complementing the primary mentor's leadership. Their involvement in shaping the training plan is highly beneficial.

Potential Kessler Foundation Mentors



John DeLuca, PhD Senior Vice President, Research and Training

Co-DirectorCenter for Multiple Sclerosis Research

Interim Director Center for Stroke Rehabilitation Research



Steven Kirshblum, MD Chief Medical Officer

Co-Director Center for Spinal Cord Injury Research

Northern New Jersey Spinal Cord Injury System (NNJSCIS)

Tim and Caroline Reynolds Center for Spinal Stimulation



Nancy Chiaravalloti, PhD Director

Center for Neuropsychology and Neuroscience Research & Center for Traumatic Brain Injury Research

Northern New Jersey TBI Model System

Co-Director

Center for Multiple Sclerosis Research

Cognitive Functioning and Cognitive Rehabilitation Laboratory



Trevor Dyson-Hudson, MD Director

Center for Spinal Cord Injury Research

Co-Director

Northern New Jersey Spinal Cord Injury System (NNJSCIS)

Derfner-Lieberman Laboratory for Regenerative Rehabilitation Research



Gail Forrest, PhD Director Tim and Caroline Reynolds Center for Spinal Stimulation

Associate Director Center for Mobility and Rehabilitation Engineering Research

Neural Plasticity Laboratory



John O'Neill, PhD Director Center for Employment and Disability Research



Susan Harkema, PhD Director Consortium Growth for Spinal Stimulation

Tim and Caroline Reynolds Center for Spinal Stimulation



Glenn Wylie, DPhil Director Rocco Ortenzio Neuroimaging Center

Center for Multiple Sclerosis Research

Potential Kessler Foundation Mentors cont.



Guang Yue, PhD DirectorCenter for Mobility and Rehabilitation
Engineering Research

Advanced Rehabilitation Neuroimaging Laboratory



Helen Genova, PhD Associate Director Center for Autism Research

Social Cognition and Neuroscience Laboratory



Jean Lengenfelder, PhD Associate Director Center for Traumatic Brain Injury Research

Cognitive and Affective Neuropsychology Laboratory



Karen J. Nolan, PhD Associate Director Center for Mobility and Rehabilitation Engineering Research

Acquired Brain Injury Mobility Laboratory



Amanda Botticello, PhD, MPH Associate Director Center for Outcomes and Assessment Research

Social Determinants of Health and Disability Outcomes Research Laboratory



Lauren Strober, PhD Assistant Director Center for Neuropsychology and Neuroscience Research

Positive Health and Well-Being Laboratory

Center for Multiple Sclerosis Research



Ekaterina Dobryakova, PhD Associate Director Center for Traumatic Brain Injury Research

Neuromotivation and Network Integrity Laboratory

Center for Multiple Sclerosis Research



Claudia Angeli, PhD Assistant Director Tim and Caroline Reynolds Center for Spinal Stimulation

Neural Plasticity Laboratory



Brian M. Sandroff, PhD Assistant Director Center for Neuropsychology and Neuroscience Research

Exercise Neurorehabilitation Research Laboratory

Center for Multiple Sclerosis Research



Bing (Brian) Yao, PhD
Assistant Director
Rocco Ortenzio Neuroimaging Center

Integrated Neurotechnology Laboratory

Center for Multiple Sclerosis Research



Ghaith J. Androwis, PhD Assistant DirectorCenter for Mobility and Rehabilitation
Engineering Research

Rehabilitation Robotics and Research Laboratory



Potential Kessler Foundation Mentors cont.



Denise Fyffe, PhD Assistant Director Center for Spinal Cord Injury Research

Center for Outcomes and Assessment Research

Health Equity in Disability and Outcomes Research Laboratory



Olga Boukrina, PhD Assistant Director Center for Stroke Rehabilitation Research

Cognitive and Affective Neuropsychology Laboratory



Peii (Peggy) Chen, PhD Assistant Director Center for Stroke Rehabilitation Research

Spatial Attention, Awareness, and Ability Laboratory



Jeanne Zanca, MPT, PhD Chair Institutional Review Board

Institutional Review Board

Assistant Director Center for Spinal Cord Injury Research

Self-Management Skill Development Laboratory



Anthony Lequerica, PhD Senior Research Scientist Center for Traumatic Brain Injury Research

Brain Injury and Behavioral Outcomes Laboratory



Vikram Shenoy Handiru, PhD Research Scientist

Center for Mobility and Rehabilitation Engineering Research

Neuromuscular and Electrophysiology Laboratory



Kiran Karunakaran, PhD Research Scientist

Center for Mobility and Rehabilitation Engineering Research

Acquired Brain Injury Mobility Laboratory

Balance Assessment and Training Laboratory



Erica Weber, PhD Research Scientist

Center for Traumatic Brain Injury Research

Assessment and Rehabilitation of Everyday Cognition Laboratory



Denise Krch, PhD Senior Research ScientistCenter for Traumatic Brain Injury
Research

Advancing Diverse Rehabilitation Treatments Laboratory



Nathan Hogaboom, PhD Research Scientist Center for Spinal Cord Injury Research

Derfner-Lieberman Laboratory for Regenerative Rehabilitation Research



Peter Barrance, PhD Senior Research Scientist Center for Mobility and Rehabilitation Engineering Research

Musculoskeletal Biomotion Laboratory



Potential Kessler Foundation Mentors cont.



Silvana Lopes Da Costa, PhD **Research Scientist** Center for Neuropsychology and Neuroscience Research

Center for Multiple Sclerosis Research

Neuropsychology of Eye Movements Laboratory



Carly Wender, PhD Research Scientist Center for Neuropsychology and Neuroscience Research

Center for Multiple Sclerosis Research

Cognitive Functioning and Cognitive Rehabilitation Laboratory



Lauren Murphy, PhD Research Scientist Center for Outcomes and Assessment Research

Social Determinants of Health and Disability Outcomes Research Laboratory



Timothy Rich, PhD, OTR/L **Research Scientist** Center for Stroke Rehabilitation Research

Spatial Attention, Awareness, and Ability Laboratory

Learning Opportunities

Research focus

Research programs are currently underway at the Foundation to improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities resulting from spinal cord injury, traumatic brain injury, stroke, neuromuscular disease, multiple sclerosis, autism and other neurological complications. Studies focus on areas such as spinal stimulation, functional electrical stimulation, MRI and fMRI imaging, advanced electromyography, prosthetic design, aging, and fatigue.

Clinical research

One of the outstanding assets of the **ARRTP** is the size and variety of clinical populations and rehabilitative treatment programs available. The program's blend of research expertise and clinical experience fosters productive collaboration. Mentors encourage fellows to test their ideas in discussions with clinical professionals. The aim is to produce PhD researchers who understand clinical realities and priorities and who select research topics of clinical relevance.

Educational institutions

Active clinical research programs in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, include physiological, psychological, behavioral, neuromodulation, and engineering problems in rehabilitation.

Research administration

Fellows will develop skills and experience in research administration by preparing research proposals, submitting these proposals to the Research Review Committee and Institutional Review Board of relevant facilities, and completing their own research project(s), which will be frequently collaborative.

Academic commitment

The fellowship program also seeks to instill academic values and attitudes through socialization experiences with colleagues in the academic environment. This support includes encouragement from organizations, mentors, and peers. The core didactic criteria provide the basic content knowledge and needed methodological skills. Work habits and involvement in simultaneous projects will be instilled. Mentors provide the socialization and development of autonomy and personal commitment necessary to sustain research activity. Local mentors, outside lecturers, and attendance at professional conferences set the context for continuing collegial activities.

Collegial and collaborative activities

Research fellows have extensive opportunities to meet experienced rehabilitation and biomedical researchers in the New Jersey/New York area. Collaboration with a prominent researcher in a specific area is not only encouraged but required as part of the individual fellow's research training plan. The process of structuring a mentoring team will cause fellows to make personal contacts with researchers throughout the Northeast U.S.

Application Details

Stipends

Stipends vary depending upon experience and training. Individuals must devote a minimum of 75 percent to 80 percent of their time to the research. Fringe benefits as well as laboratory and travel support will be provided.

Application process

The initial application involves submitting a cover letter detailing your research and clinical interests, background, and training, as well as copies of your CV, graduate transcript, and representative publications or manuscripts. Following review of the completed application materials, appropriate candidates will be contacted and invited for a formal interview.

Eligibility criteria

- Doctoral degree in a field relevant to rehabilitation
 - PhD candidates planning dissertation research on topics relevant to rehabilitation are also encouraged to apply
 - Non-U.S. citizens are eligible to apply provided they can be lawfully employed in the U.S.
- An excellent academic record
- Proficiency in fundamental research methodologies, with a strong preference for candidates who have published work or a publishable dissertation
- MD candidates should have at least initial research experience, demonstrated through participation in research projects
- An expressed interest in pursuing a career in rehabilitation, particularly in academics or research

To apply

Please email the following materials to the appropriate fellowship program leader shown below in your chosen area of study:

- Cover letter detailing research and clinical interests, background, and training
- CV or resume
- Copy of graduate transcripts (for current students and recent graduates)
- Copies of publications or manuscripts that illustrate your research work
- Three letters of recommendation

ARRTP Postdoctoral Fellowship Program Leaders

Autism

Helen Genova, PhD

HGenova@KesslerFoundation.org

Human Performance and Engineering

Guang Yue, PhD

GYue@KesslerFoundation.org

Neuropsychology/Neuroscience

Nancy Chiaravalloti, PhD

NChiaravalloti@KesslerFoundation.org

Multiple Sclerosis

Nancy Chiaravalloti, PhD

NChiaravalloti@KesslerFoundation.org

John DeLuca, PhD

JDeluca@KesslerFoundation.org

Traumatic Brain Injury

Nancy Chiaravalloti, PhD

NChiaravalloti@KesslerFoundation.org

Spinal Cord Injury

Trevor Dyson-Hudson, MD

TDysonhudson@KesslerFoundation.org

Spinal Stimulation

Gail Forrest, PhD

GForrest@KesslerFoundation.org

Stroke

Peii Chen, PhD

PChen@KesslerFoundation.org

Olga Boukrina, PhD

OBoukrina@KesslerFoundation.org

For any additional information, contact Fellowships@KesslerFoundation.org

Current Areas of Research

The list below highlights key research areas aligned with available Foundation mentors. While this list serves as a starting point, fellows are encouraged to pursue their own interests, which may span multiple topics or explore new directions. Faculty at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation, and other affiliated institutions may support a range of research beyond the areas listed below.

Brain Injury

- Behavioral management
- Cognitive rehabilitation
- Driving evaluation
- Effectiveness of post-acute cognitive remediation programs
- Fatigue
- Learning and memory
- Neuroimaging
- Neuropharmacological management of post-traumatic fatigue and cognitive deficits
- Role of memory and other neurobehavioral factors
- Spatial cognitive disorders
- Static and dynamic balance deficits

Biomechanics

- Intersegmental coordination of upper and lower limbs
- Kinematic and kinetic analysis
- Static and dynamic gait stability
- Static and dynamic posturography

Exercise Physiology

- Blood lipids, glucose, and insulin sensitivity
- Body composition
- Energy consumption
- Functional electrical stimulation
- Motor control
- Skeletal muscle physiology and morphometry

Engineering

- Design and application of assistive devices including robotics
- Dynamic EEG and EMG algorithms of human movement
- Electrical engineering, electrophysiology and imaging/neuroimaging
- Motion capture and analysis
- Signal and image processing

Functional Rehabilitation

- Locomotor training
- Electrical stimulation
- Cognitive demands of driving
- Cognitive retraining
- Evaluation of activities of daily living
- Wheelchair propulsion biomechanics
- Osteoporosis after SCI
- Pain after SCI

Multiple Sclerosis

- Cognitive rehabilitation
- Functional assessment
- Information processing speed
- Neuroimaging
- New learning and memory
- Working memory



Current Areas of Research cont.

Neuroscience

- Immunology of multiple sclerosis
- Molecular neurobiology
- Neuroanatomy
- Neurodegenerative Parkinson's and Alzheimer diseases
- Neuroendocrinology
- Neurotransmitters
- Reorganization of motor cortex
- Reorganization of central pattern generators
- Brain-behavior correlations in neurological symptoms and treatment
- Noninvasive brain stimulation and brain systems
- Sensorimotor and neuromuscular physiology
- Structural and functional neuroimaging

Orthopedics

- Musculoskeletal biomechanics
- Joint pain and pathology
- Orthopedic rehabilitation
- Total joint arthroplasty

Outcomes Research

- Functional outcome studies
- Health services research
- Quality of life
- Vocational mentoring and role restoration

Psychology / Neuropsychology

- Aphasia, normal speech, and language
- Cognitive rehabilitation
- Information processing speed
- Learning and memory
- Limb apraxia, normal limb praxis
- Neuroimaging
- Relationship between neuropsychological assessment and functional status
- Spatial cognition and spatial neglect
- Working memory
- Effects of noninvasive brain stimulation on cognitive function and cognitive disorders

Psychosocial Factors

• Home treatment of behavioral problems

Spinal Cord Injury

- Alternative pain therapies
- Bone, muscle, and soft tissue degeneration and regeneration
- Cardiovascular function and disease
- Chemodenervation treatment for spasticity
- Clinical trials
- Diet and exercise
- Drug and hormone therapies
- Functional use of the wheelchair
- Heart rate variability and autonomic nervous system dysfunction
- Health disparities
- Osteoporosis
- Quality of life rehabilitation
- Secondary disability treatment
- Shoulder pain and pathology
- Supported walking
- Urological function
- Wheelchair propulsion biomechanics



Current Areas of Research cont.

Stroke

- Amnesia and functional disability related to memory disorder
- Aphasia and functional communication
- Body-weight supported walking
- Chemodenervation treatment for spasticity
- Disorders of attention
- Disorders of emotional perception, representation, and behavior
- Disorders of movement and physical therapy
- Electrical stimulation
- Exercise fitness training
- Gait economy
- Limb apraxia and other motor-action disorders
- Neuropsychological factors
- Spatial cognition and spatial neglect
- Virtual reality and motor recovery of hemiparesis
- Noninvasive brain stimulation to investigate brain mechanisms, detect motor improvement, and as a therapeutic intervention

Technology

- Telerehabilitation
- Virtual reality



Contact Us

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