

Annual Report 2022/23



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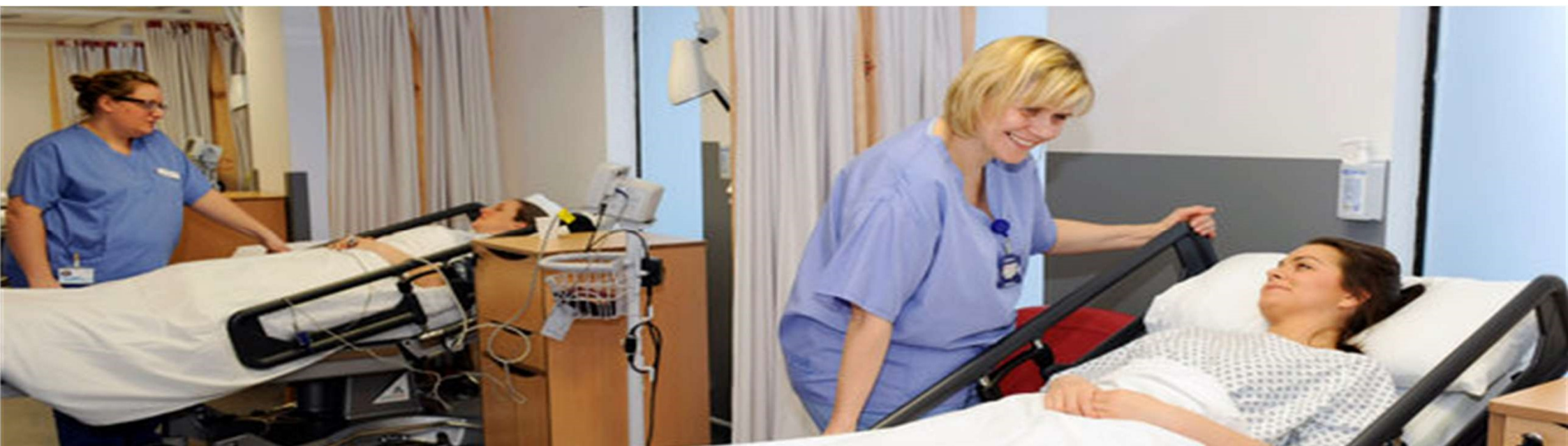
Foreword

Welcome to the 2022/23 Annual Report from the Fertility Scotland Network (FSN), the national strategic network for fertility services in NHSScotland.

Fertility Scotland works in partnership, across traditional organisational and geographical boundaries, to realise a programme of work that supports the delivery of fertility services in NHSScotland.

The network was established in 2021, and over the past two years has made significant progress in establishing its structures and developing work programmes. In January 2023, the network commissioned independent research by the Customer Insight Team at National Services Scotland to determine whether FSN was meeting the expectations of its stakeholders and determine areas for improvement. Research findings are very positive. The network looks forward to 2023/24 with ambitious plans.

Abha Maheshwari (Clinical Lead) & Joanne Leitch (Scientific Lead)

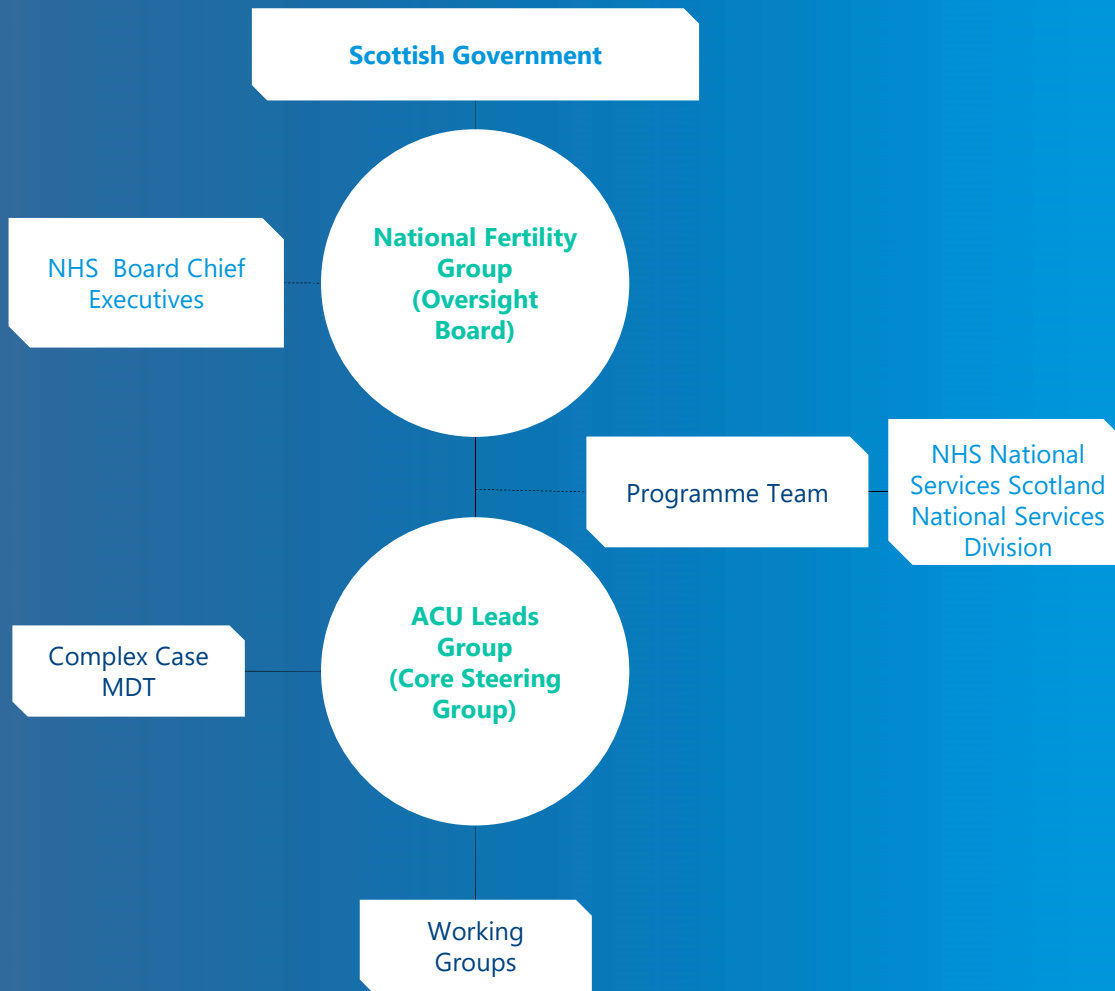


Introduction

This Annual Report aims to provide stakeholders with an update on the work of the Fertility Scotland national strategic network, focusing on key achievements during the financial year from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

Achieving the progress outlined in the Annual Report would not have been possible without the energy, time, advice and expertise invested by network stakeholders.

The Network Programme Team would like to take this opportunity to thank members for their commitment and contributions, with special thanks to those who have given their time to chair Network work streams, as well as to Scottish Government for their continued support.



Governance Structure

Network Oversight Board

The Fertility Scotland Oversight Board function sits with the Scottish Government's *National Fertility Group*, chaired by Mary Morgan (Chief Executive, NHS National Services Scotland).

The aim of the Board is to provide national strategic leadership to the network and advise NHS Boards and other partners in relation to the delivery of fertility services in NHSScotland, using the most up to date evidence base and in line with strategic local, regional and national NHS and Scottish Government priorities.

Network Core Steering Group

Reporting to the National Fertility Group, the Fertility Scotland Core Steering Group is responsible for overseeing the networks' work programme to deliver on its agreed strategic priorities. The group works across geographical and organisational boundaries to support Boards with a 'Once for Scotland' approach to the planning, design and delivery of fertility services in NHSScotland. The Core Steering Group is co-located with the Scottish Government's *Assisted Conception Unit Leads Group*. It is co-chaired by the Scottish Government Policy Lead, Sarah Corcoran, and the Network Lead Clinician, Abha Maheshwari.

Stakeholder Research

The Customer Experience Team at National Services Scotland was tasked to conduct independent research across key stakeholder groups, to understand the network's successes and areas for improvement to ensure the service is relevant and meets stakeholders needs. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each stakeholder group. The research focused on groups/individuals with regular exposure to the network, including; clinicians, nurses, counsellors, scientific staff, quality managers, business managers, patient and policy representatives.

Results

Results show high levels of engagement across all key stakeholder groups, positive sentiment to the network impact and support for the networks core purpose. Seven key themes were highlighted where stakeholders said they benefitted from the network (Figure 1).

Although participants were overall very positive, five areas for future enhancement were suggested: participation, clarity of purpose, governance, processes and learning.

Conclusion

Building on these positive findings, in 2023/2024 FSN will focus on the areas suggested for future improvement and will report back to the Oversight Board on progress.

Figure 1: Themes highlighted that benefitted from the Network.



"Good networking within our specialism. To access advice or when we have something to share."

"Very beneficial to link the units together and have a go-to for advice."

"Communications between centres better and bred to a good working environment across Scotland."

"[The network] really listen to the patient's perspective."

"I am new to the field, so it has been useful for her to connect with other quality managers."

"The network is a great support to all work together for the same aim."

"The network is very inclusive as patient representatives are included in all groups."

"[The network] gets the right people around the table."

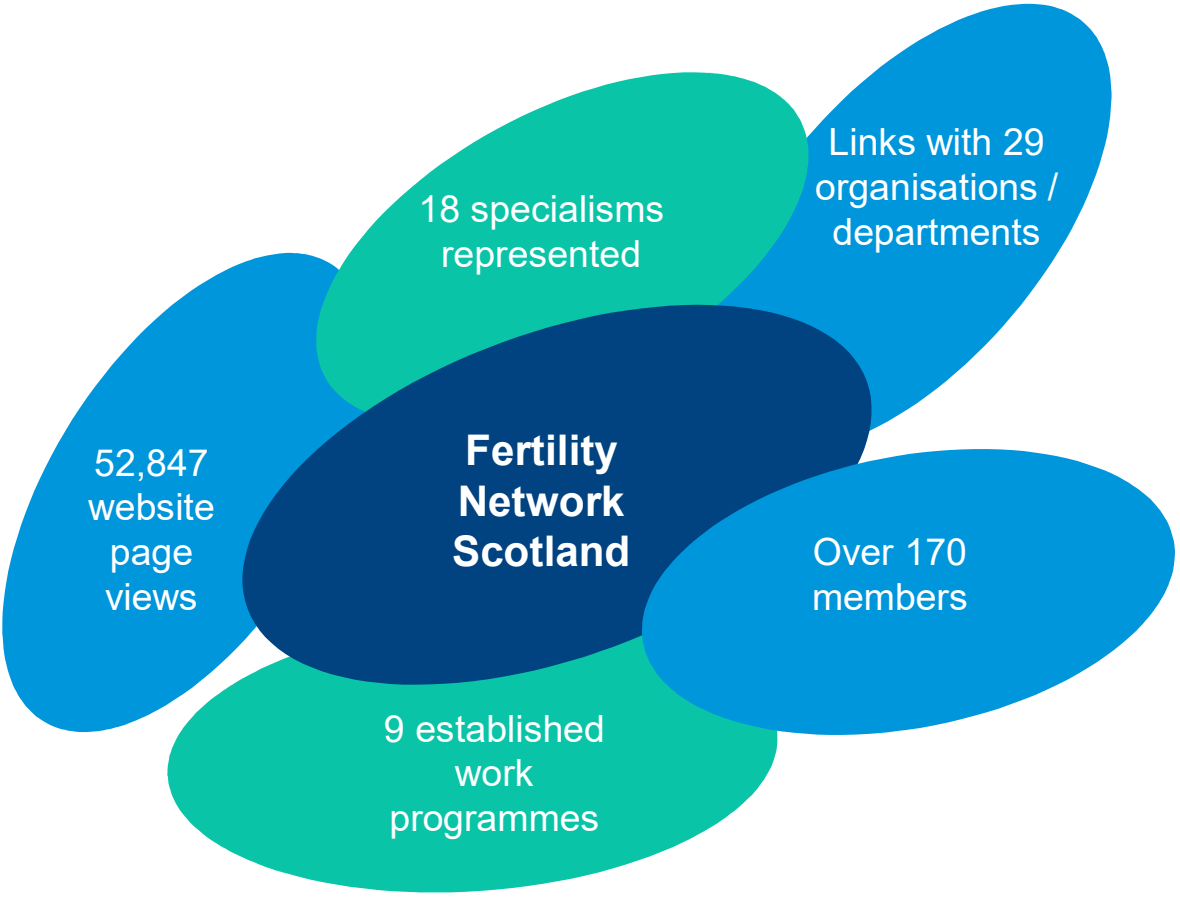
"Bringing people together and getting to agree on many things is a plus."

"Good thing not to duplicate work in the nation."

"Network gave us a lot of confidence that we were pushing in the right direction."

"Seminars have been good. Broad areas allows everyone to join in"

Stakeholder Feedback



 Stakeholder Engagement

Throughout 2022/23 the network continued to build its engagement and dialogue with stakeholders to be able to progress its strategic priorities and deliver value and benefit to network stakeholders.

The graph above summarises key information about the engagement the network has had with its stakeholders.

Progress in 2022/23

RAGB	Description	Milestones achieved
Blue (B)	The network achieved the objective.	11 (42%)
Green (G)	The network is on track to achieve the objective by the agreed end date.	9 (34%)
Amber (A)	A risk the network will not achieve the objective by the agreed end date but progress has been made.	6 (23%)
Red (R)	The network is unlikely to achieve the objective by the agreed end date / major barriers to progress.	0

The table summarises the progress the network achieved in 2022/23 in delivering against the agreed work plan for the year.

Overall, 76% of work streams were either completed or are on track for completion as planned. There were some delays with the remaining work streams but progress has been made towards completion.

A more detailed overview of progress in each work stream is provided on the following pages.

Progress in 2022/23

Deliverable



*Covid-19 Response

The Network has provided support to these planning processes as required.

Complex case

This is a multidisciplinary group co-chaired by Scottish Government and FSN. The group :

- Provides a forum to discuss challenging cases.
- Highlights issues that may feed into policy recommendations.
- Serves as a teaching forum.

Ovulation Induction

- Agree a standardised protocol for ovulation induction across Scotland.
- Provide patient information for ovulation induction.
- Provide a means of monitoring outcome of treatments.

Progress/Next Steps



Progress: The Network has provided expertise and support in providing guidance in line with the requirements of Scottish Government and the stakeholders.

Next Steps: It is envisaged this work will be phased out during 2023.

Progress: Since 1 April 2023, 33 cases have been reviewed. The scope of the meeting has been expanded to include specialist areas such as Pre-implantation Genetic Testing.

Next Steps: Themes raised will be reported to the Scottish Government led Access Criteria group.

Progress: The group has drafted a patient pathway and consent forms.

Next Steps: Publish the protocol, patient information and collate outcome data.

Benefits



- A “Once for Scotland” approach to managing Covid-19 in the fertility sector.

- Review cases using an multi-disciplinary team approach including patient representatives.
- Provides an opportunity for professional learning.
- Formalised route for informing policy recommendations

- Evidence based recommendations for treatment.
- Standardized patient information sheets.
- On-going monitoring of treatment outcomes to inform future recommendations.



NATIONAL GUIDANCE
& PATHWAYS

Progress in 2022/23

Deliverable



*Storage

Following changes to UK legislation governing the storage of gametes and embryos, Scottish Government and FSN produced 'Once for Scotland' protocols and consent forms

Progress/Next Steps



Progress: The protocols and consent forms have been completed and approved by the ACU Leads and the Oversight Board.

Next Steps: Seeking final Scottish Government approval for the documentation.

Benefits



- i) A "Once for Scotland" approach to managing storage of gametes and embryos.

Stakeholder Engagement

The network commissioned the Customer Insight Team at NSS to determine Stakeholder Insight and Areas for Improvement.

Progress: The findings of this work are complete.

Next steps: Action areas for improvement.

- i) Improve engagement and satisfaction with stakeholders.
- ii) Increase impact of the network.



NATIONAL GUIDANCE
& PATHWAYS



PATIENT/PERSON
ENGAGEMENT

* Scottish Government lead work that is supported by the Network

Progress in 2022/23

Deliverable



Data Group

- Establish mechanisms for gathering data to inform decision making and the strategic direction of the network.
- Responsible for ensuring data is captured to determine the impact of changes implemented by the network.

Audit Group

- Establish consistent audit proformas across all tertiary fertility care centres to comply with regulatory requirements and provide a forum to share outcome data.

Seminar Series (Professionals)

- Provide a monthly seminar series to professionals that are associated with NHS Fertility Services.

Progress/Next Steps



Progress: A first round of data capture has been completed.

Next Steps: Review the data and make recommendations.

Progress: To date eight "Once for Scotland" audit forms have been generated.

Next Steps: Continue to prioritise areas for audits.

Progress: A seminar series has now been established and six seminars have been completed.

Next steps: The seminar series will continue. Following outcome of the Customer Insight Research, timings and the format of the seminars will be reviewed.

Benefits



- Provide data for the Core Steering Group and Oversight Board to advise on the strategic direction of the network.
- Determine if changes implemented by the Network improve delivery of fertility services.

- Streamlined process for compiling audit proformas that are HFEA and ISO15189 compliant.
- Improved inspection outcomes and delivery of patient care by sharing audit outcome data.
- Shared learning between centres.

- Reduce the requirements for each department to arrange their own CPD events.
- Provide a forum to communicate best practice, including protocols generated by the network.



DATA &
AUDIT



EDUCATION
& WORKFORCE

Progress in 2022/23

Deliverable



Pre-implantation Genetic Testing (PGT)

- Together with a parallel work stream on genetic testing undertaken by NSD commissioners (NGS-PGT-SLWG), provide clear recommendations for the future provision of a PGT service in Scotland.

Progress/Next Steps



Progress: The patient pathway has been reviewed along with predicted patient requirements.

Next steps: With the NGS-PGT-SLWG make recommendations about future provision of PGT

Benefits



- Improve overall patient care, through a more consistent patient pathway.
- Potentially improve pregnancy outcomes by using more current cytogenetic analysis technologies



Semen Analysis

- Provide standardised protocols and reporting templates for diagnostic and treatment semen analysis.
- Agree a decision making process for clinical treatment based on the standardised protocols.

Progress: A publication is currently being drafted. Decision making process for clinical treatment have been paused, as this work is also being carried out by the British Fertility Society.

Next steps: There has been a request to continue the group to support implementation of UKAS, this will need to be approved by NFG.

- Support laboratories to establish UKAS Accreditation.
- Provide evidence based standard protocols for treatment decision making.
- Improve the quality of data collected to inform on improving the delivery of service and patient outcomes in the future.

*Donor Recruitment

- Support Scottish Government in their donor recruitment campaign.

Progress: The network hosts the donor recruitment web page and has provided professional support to SG. To date >50, 000 visits to the donor web page.

Next steps: The network will continue to support SG as required.

- Streamline the recruitment process, obtaining professional and legal advice as required.
- Increase the number of donors within Scotland.

Changes to 2022-2023 Programme

In addition to the work programme agreed in April 2022, the following changes were subsequently implemented and approved by the Core Steering Group and the Oversight Board:

i) Data protection for patients and partners (Agreed)

It was originally envisaged that a “Data Protection Group” would be established by the Network. It was agreed a more appropriate pathway would be to incorporate national guidance on data protection into specific work programmes. For example, the network has collaborated with the National Information Leads group (hosted at NSS) on the referral process as part of the “Referral Working Group”.

ii) Seminar for patients (Agreed)

The original work plan included a patient seminar series. This would result in duplication of work performed by Fertility Network UK, that has established processes for patient education. It was agreed Fertility Scotland would liaise with Fertility Network UK to implement seminars as required.

iii) National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) Guidelines (Completed)

In 2022, NICE released a consultation on reviewing the guidelines for fertility treatment. The network submitted a response.

iv) Letter to patient who have agreed to posthumous use of gametes and embryos (Completed)

In July, 2022 the HFEA released new consent forms that included the consent for the posthumous use of eggs and embryos. The network produced a letter to patients describing the ramifications of the changes.

iv) Treating Patients with Blood Borne Viruses (Completed)

The European Society for Human Reproduction and Embryology released guidance on treating Fertility Patients with Blood Borne viruses, this was reviewed and adapted for use in Scotland.

Work Priorities 2023/24 (agreed by the Oversight Board Mar 2023)

***Access Criteria**

This will be a Scottish Government led group, with Fertility Scotland providing programme management support and expertise. The group will review the interpretation of the access criteria with the aim of ensuring a “One Scotland” approach.

Electronic Consent

In 2019, an electronic consent platform (Fertility Consent) was introduced into the four NHS tertiary fertility centres across Scotland. As the platform has now been in use for more than three years, there was an ask from stakeholders to review the consent platform and pathway.

Electronic paper records – IDEAS

Three of the four tertiary fertility centres use electronic paper records (IDEAS), the fourth centre will be implementing the software in 2023. Ideally all centres will have standardised the set-up of IDEAS. The Network will perform a gap analysis to determine the feasibility of standardising IDEAS.

Document Control

To date the Network has generated 19 documents, robust management of these documents is required. The Network will work with the fertility centres’ Quality Managers to implement systems to manage the documents.

Surgical sperm retrieval

A defined patient pathway is required for patients requiring surgical sperm retrieval across Scotland.

Intrauterine Insemination

A “Once for Scotland” protocol for Intrauterine Insemination is required.

Work Priorities 2023/24 (agreed by the Oversight Board Mar 2023)



DONATION &
SURROGACY

Surrogacy

- Standardise the work up for intended parents and surrogates
- Establish a forum to discuss cases across Scotland



PATIENT/PERSON
ENGAGEMENT

Equality and Diversity

Review the current provision of treatment to and make recommendations to reduce inequalities in access to and outcome of treatment



RESEARCH
& INNOVATION

Research

Improve the management of fertility research across Scotland and build capacity



Finance

The Network is funded by an allocation from Scottish Government.

The Network operated within its budget for the financial year 2022/23.

Network Programme Team

The Network Programme Team comprises of:



Abha Maheshwari
Clinical Lead



Joanne Leitch
Scientific Lead



Janis Heaney
Ass. Director



Carsten Mandt
Sen Programme Manager



N Prathalingam
Programme Manager



Tolu Oyedepu
Prog Support Officer

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