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Prevalence and risk factors associated with hyperglycemia in patients attending the Urban Health Center of Franceville, Gabon.

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Abstract

Objective: This cross-sectional and prospective study, conducted from July 16 to September 30, 2024, at the Urban Health Center of Franceville (Gabon), assessed the prevalence of hyperglycemia—a key marker of diabetes—and its associated risk factors among 112 participants.

Methods: Diagnosis, based on blood glucose levels (RAYTO RT-1904C spectrometer, ADA criteria).

Results: It was revealed an overall prevalence of 11.61% (95% CI: [0.063-0.19]). Multivariate analyses identified significant associations with: family history of diabetes (adjusted OR = 4.5; p = 0.003), smoking (adjusted OR = 4.1; p = 0.039), overweight/obesity (adjusted OR = 1.81; p = 0.024), and hypertension (adjusted OR = 1.54; p = 0.031). In contrast, age, sex, residence, or socioeconomic status showed no association with risk.

Conclusion: The results highlight a notable prevalence of hyperglycemia, particularly among young adults, and call for preventive strategies targeting identified modifiable factors (lifestyle, weight management). This study contributes to understanding non-communicable diseases in sub-Saharan African contexts

Keywords: Hyperglycemia, Prevalence, Risk factors, CSUF, Gabon.

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1. Introduction

Hyperglycemia, an elevation of sugar (glucose) levels in the blood, is a metabolic imbalance that can have significant health consequences, especially if left unmanaged (Mouri et al., 2024). Obtained from food, glucose, the main source of energy for our body, passes into the blood where it is regulated by insulin, a hormone produced by the pancreas, essential for the penetration of this glucose into cells to be used as energy (Nakran et al., 2024). However, it can happen that the body does not produce enough insulin, which is referred to as type 1 diabetes, or that the body's cells become resistant to insulin, known as type 2 diabetes (Magliano et al., 2021). According to the WHO, hyperglycemia is a major risk factor for many chronic diseases, including cardiovascular diseases, kidney diseases, and neuropathies (Swamy et al., 2023). If left untreated, hyperglycemia can lead to serious and irreversible complications, affecting quality of life and reducing life expectancy (Mouri et al., 2024). Diabetes and its complications represent a considerable economic cost for health systems worldwide (Kansra et al., 2023). Therefore, hyperglycemia is a global public health problem that requires urgent and coordinated action. Prevention, early detection, and appropriate management are essential to reduce the burden of hyperglycemia. In Africa, there is an epidemic of this condition, often linked to diabetes, which is growing at an alarming rate due to a combination of socio-economic and behavioral factors (Hossain et al., 2024). Like other developing countries, hyperglycemia, characterized by high blood glucose levels, is a growing public health problem in Gabon. It is often associated with diabetes but can also be a precursor to it. Despite numerous studies conducted on Type 1 and Type 2 Diabetes in Gabon (Mba et al., 2024), several factors, not vet elucidated, contribute to the increase in hyperglycemia in this country (Galicia-Garcia et al., 2024). It is in this context that this study was undertaken to assess the prevalence and factors associated with hyperglycemia in patients consulting at the Urban Health Center of Franceville, in southeastern Gabon.

2. Materials and Methods

2-1. Study setting and location

This study was conducted by the University of Sciences and Techniques of Masuku in collaboration with the Urban Health Center of Franceville (UHCF), located in the 1st arrondissement of Franceville.

2-2. Study type and period

This was a prospective and cross-sectional study conducted from July 16 to September 30, 2024.

2-3. Study population

The study population consisted of individuals of both sexes who came for consultation at the Urban Health Center of Franceville (UHCF).

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2-4. Study eligibility criteria

II-4.1. Inclusion criteria:

Individuals of both sexes, aged 18 years and older, residing in Franceville and surrounding departments, who consulted the Urban Health Center of Franceville, had a test requisition for a diagnosis of hyperglycemia, diabetes or at risk of developing diabetes, and who had signed informed consent to participate in the study, and had correctly answered the questionnaire submitted to them, were included in this study.

2-4.2. Exclusion criteria:

Due to physiological changes related to pregnancy that may influence the results, pregnant women, patients suffering from severe acute illnesses (infections, heart attacks, etc.), individuals participating in another study, individuals newly arrived in Franceville, and individuals unable to understand the information provided or who had not given their consent were excluded from this study.

2-4.3. Sample size determination

In order to determine the number of participants needed for this study on the epidemiological and clinical aspects of hyperglycemia in patients consulting at the Urban Health Center of Franceville, in southeastern Gabon, the standard sample calculation formula for a single proportion was used:

$n = (Z\alpha / 2)^2 x (P x (1 - P)) / d^2$

This formula, already used in other studies (Mba et al., 2023), allows for the calculation of the sample size (n) with a 95% confidence level ($Z\alpha/2 = 1.96$). In the absence of precise data on the prevalence of malaria in Franceville, a conservative value of 50% was chosen for this study. To compensate for possible dropouts, the initial sample size (84 people) was increased by 10%, in accordance with the recommendations of Mba et al. (2024). Thus, this study ultimately included 112 participants.

II-5. Data collection

Rigorous data collection was essential to obtain reliable and interpretable results during this study. It required careful planning, adequate training of the Center's health personnel, and respect for the ethical principles of research

II-5.1. Questionnaire

A structured and pre-established questionnaire was self-administered to collect data on nonmodifiable factors (sociodemographic characteristics, family history, and history of gestational diabetes) and modifiable factors such as medical history (diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular

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diseases, family history of diabetes), and risk factors (obesity (BMI calculation), smoking, alcohol consumption) in the study participants.

II.5.2. Sample collection and diagnosis

II.5.2.1 Sample collection

After signing the informed consent, blood samples were taken from a peripheral vein, but sometimes more rarely by capillary sampling (finger pulp). To avoid sampling and handling errors, good laboratory practice standards were respected.

II.5.2.2. Diagnosis of hyperglycemia and measurement of triglycerides Principle of the test

Glucose, in the presence of glucose oxidase (GOD), is oxidized to gluconic acid and hydrogen peroxide. Hydrogen peroxide, in the presence of peroxidase (POD), reacts with 4-aminophenazone and phenol to give a colored compound, the intensity of which is proportional to the glucose concentration in the sample.

Operating Procedure for Preparations

After collecting the patient's blood in tubes, these were homogenized and then left to rest for a few minutes so that the blood mixed with the additives contained in the tubes. Finally, they were centrifuged for 5 minutes at 5000 rpm to separate the plasma. The serum was then isolated and used for biochemical analyses.

Serum analysis was performed using a RAYTO RT-1904C spectrometer, which was first turned on to the "power On" position and calibrated for the chosen test. The calibration process continued by checking the test settings (wavelength, lamp status, temperature, linearity, etc.), then following the automaton's navigation commands.

The diagnosis of hyperglycemia, carried out by certified laboratory technicians, consisted of a combination of blood glucose concentration (glycemia) measurements after fasting (FPG). Diabetes was defined by the presence of a fasting plasma glucose (FPG) level \geq 7.0 mmol/l (126 mg/dL) in a patient with classic symptoms of hyperglycemia (ADA; 2023).

For hypertriglyceridemia, triglycerides (TG), total cholesterol, high-density lipoproteins (HDL), and low-density lipoproteins (LDL) \geq 1.7 mmol/L (150 mg/dL) were measured in the laboratory using the analyzer, from blood plasma samples collected from all participants. As elsewhere, thresholds were used according to the suggestions of the National Cholesterol Education Program Adult Treatment Panel III (Parhofer et al., 2019).

NB: The analyzer calibration was checked for each measurement.

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II.6. Operational Definitions

Body Mass Index (BMI): Calculated using the formula weight (kg)/height (m)², the BMI of the participants was considered normal for a value between 18.5 and 24.9 kg/m². The individual was underweight for a BMI < 18.5 kg/m²; overweight if the BMI ranged between 25 and 29.9 kg/m²; and obese if the BMI \geq 30 kg/m² (Dávila et al., 2023).

Hypertension (HTN): As elsewhere, blood pressure was taken in a single visit using a sphygmomanometer, and hypertension was defined based on the diagnosis of hypertension or a blood pressure \geq 140/90 mmHg on two readings taken at least 5 minutes apart (Cífková et al., 2023).

Alcohol consumption was based on a frequency of more than 3 (2 for women) standard glasses of wine per day or more than 10 (5 for women) local beers per week. Traditional alcoholic beverages were not assessed. Current smoking was defined as consumption of at least one cigarette per day.

II.7. Quality Assurance

Using a clinical information sheet, the quality of the data, including analysis results, medical history, and risk factors, was ensured through preliminary testing of the questionnaires on 5% of the participants, after appropriate training of personnel for data collection and management of an integrated quality control system at the Urban Health Center of Franceville. All laboratory procedures were performed in accordance with standardized operating procedures.

II.8. Ethical Considerations

Ethical authorization was obtained from the Chief Physician of the Urban Health Center of Franceville, which maintains partnerships with the Faculty of Science at USTM. An agreement was signed by the Dean of the Faculty of Science to conduct the study within the aforementioned structure. Written informed consent was obtained from each participant, who was informed in advance not only of the procedure and reasons for the sampling, but also of the right to terminate their participation in this study at any time. Confidentiality of information was maintained through codes and storage in a locked cabinet. Patients diagnosed with diabetes or hypertriglyceridemia received regular follow-up.

II.9. Statistical Analysis

The data collected during this study were entered into a Microsoft Excel 2013 spreadsheet. Once cleaned and secured, they were analyzed using R software version 3.6.1. Descriptive statistical analyses were performed to determine means with standard deviation for continuous data and frequencies with percentages. The association between independent and dependent variables was determined using bivariate analysis, and all variables recognized as risk factors for hyperglycemia were further analyzed by multivariate binary logistic regression to adjust for

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confounding factors. Results were considered significant at a 95% confidence interval for any p-value less than or equal to 0.05.

III. Results

III.1. Clinical characteristics of the study participants (N=112)

Out of the 112 study participants (100% response rate), the average age was 37 years (37 ± 13.75 years). The majority group was female (60.71%) and aged 41 to 60 years (45.5%). Most participants were professionally active (55.36%). Residents of the semi-urban area of Franceville were the majority (54.46%), compared to those residing in the surrounding departments (rural) (45.54%) (Table 1).

Table 1: Sociodemographic characteristics of participants who consulted the Urban Health Center during the study period (N=112)

Variables	Number of participants	Percentages (%)	
Gender			
Male	44	39.29	
Female	68	60.71	
Age groups (years)			
≤ 20	7	6.25	
21 - 40	23	20.54	
41 - 60	51	45.54	
≥ 61	31	27.67	
Residence			
Franceville (Urban)	61	54.46	
Surrounding departments	51	45.54	
(rural)			
Marital status			
Married	89	79.47	
Single	17	15.17	
Divorced	6	5.36	
Employment status			
Unemployed	50	44.64	
Employed	62	55.36	

III.2 Clinical characteristics of study participants

The results in Table 2 show that the majority of participants (92.66%) did not use tobacco. 86.61% had no family history of diabetes. In addition, 78.57% had a normal BMI, 66.07% were physically active, but 29.46% were positive for hypertension and 22.32% had high triglyceride levels.

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Table 2: Clinical characteristics of participants who consulted the Urban Health Center during the study period (N=112)

Variables	Nombre de	Pourcentages (%)				
	participants					
Smoking						
Yes	8	7.14				
No	104	92.66				
Family history of diabetes	Family history of diabetes					
Yes	15	13.39				
No	97	86.61				
BMI	(Body Mass Index					
Normal (BMI =18.5 and 24.9 kg/m ²)	88	78.57				
Overweight/obese(BMIbetween 25 and \geq 30 kg/m²)	24	21.43				
Physical activity						
Yes	74	66.07				
No	38	33.93				
Hypertension						
Positive	33	29.46				
Négative	81	79.5				
Triglyceride levels						
Normal (2 to 2.5g/l)	87	77.68				
Elevated	25	22.32				

III.3. Overall prevalence of hyperglycemia in study participants (N= 112)

In the present study, 13 people were diagnosed with hyperglycemia, indicating an overall prevalence of 11.61% (95% CI: [0.063- 0.19]). The highest proportion of this condition was observed in the 21-40 age group 5 (21.7%), followed by those aged 60 and over (16.13%).

III.4. Factors associated with hyperglycemia among study participants

From the variables tested for the presence of an association with hyperglycemia among study participants, a multivariate logistic regression test showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the prevalence of hyperglycemia and sociodemographic characteristics such as age, gender, residence, marital status, and professional status (p-value > 0.05). However, having a family history of diabetes (adjusted Odds Ratio = 4.5; 95% CI [3.59; 58.8], p=0.003*), smoking (adjusted Odds Ratio = 4.1; 95% CI [1.17; 40.5], p=0.039*), being overweight or obese (BMI between 25 and \geq 30 kg/m²) (adjusted Odds Ratio = 1.81; 95% CI [1.50; 30.99], p=0.024*), and being positive for hypertension (adjusted Odds Ratio = 1.54; 95%

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CI [1.32; 31.41], p=0.031*), were significantly associated with the prevalence of hyperglycemia, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Bivariate and multivariate logistic regression of factors associated with hyperglycemia in patients who consulted the CSUF during the period of this study.

Variables	VariablesTotal number of patients on treatment (%)Overall prevalence of hyperglycemia % (n)	Overall	Bivariate analysis		Multivariate analysis	
		Crude OR		Ajusted OR 95% CI	p- value	
95% CI		1				
95% CI	p-value					
Gender					-	-
Female		L				
Male	44 (39.29)	15.90 (7/44)	1.94		-	-
[0.52 ;7.6]	0.37				-	-
	-	-			-	-
					-	-
Age groups (y	years)	1		•	1	
≤ 20	7 (6.25)	0 (0/7)	Reference	-	0.05 [0.03 ;1.14]	0.058
21 - 40	23(20.54)	21.74 (5/23)	2.78		0.33 [0.01 ;10.0]	0.53
[0.64 ;11.04]	0.14	-	-		-	-
41 - 60				•		•
[0.05;1.35]	0.14	-	-		-	-
≥61	31 (27.67)	16.13 (5/31)	1.75		-	-
[0.41;6.71]		-	-			
Marital status					-	-
Married	89 (79.47)	6.74 (6/89)	0.17		-	-
[0.04 ; 0.64]			1		•	·
[0.03 ;1.14]	0.058				2.18 [1.17 ;40.5]	0.039*
Single	17(15.17)	23.53 (4/17)	2.77		-	-
[0.54;11.9]						

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					1		
[0.01;10.0]	0.53				4.50	0.005*	
					[3.59 ;58.8]		
Divorced	6(5.36)	0.5 (3/6)	Reference	-	-	-	
Professional satuts							
Employed	62 (55.36)	8.07 (5/62)	Reference	-	-	-	
Unemployed	50 (44.64)	16.0 (8/50)	1.33		1.81	0.024*	
					[1.5; 30.99]		
[0.35 ; 5.55]							
Residence					-	-	
Franceville	61 (54.46)	16.39 (10/61)	0.32		0.31	0.27	
					[0.04; 2.48]		
[0.06;1.35]	[0.06 ;1.35]						
Surrounding	51 (45.54)	5.88 (3/51)	Reference	-	1.54	0.031*	
departments					[1.32;31.41]		
(rural)							
					-	-	
Smoking							
Yes	8 (7.14)	37.5 (3/8)	5.5		-	-	
[0.74	0.049	2.18			-	-	
;33.61]							

Discussion

Hyperglycemia represents a major public health challenge globally, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. In Gabon, and more specifically in Franceville, this condition exhibits specific characteristics influenced by socio-economic, environmental, and genetic factors. In this context, a study was conducted at the Urban Health Center of Franceville to examine the epidemiological and clinical aspects of hyperglycemia among patients in this region. To better understand the prevalence of this disease, identify associated risk factors, and characterize the profiles of affected patients, the present study reported an overall prevalence of hyperglycemia of 11.61% (95% CI: [0.063–0.19]). This result is much lower than the 62.9% reported in Gaza (AlHelo et al., 2019), the 17.1% reported in Myanmar (Ave et al., 2020), and the 20.6% reported in Bhutan (Kumar et al., 2014). It is closer to the 12.4% reported in Korea (Hyon et al., 2017) but significantly higher than a previous study that reported hyperglycemia at 2.8% in a rural area of Bangladesh (Islam et al., 2019). The diversity of hyperglycemia prevalence reported in the scientific literature can be explained by a multitude of factors. The methods used, such as diagnostic criteria and measurement tools, can vary significantly between studies. For example, fasting blood glucose thresholds may differ, directly impacting the number of individuals classified as hyperglycemic (Mathew et al., 2024). Additionally, the characteristics of the

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populations studied strongly influence the results. Age, for instance, is a recognized risk factor, as is ethnicity, due to genetic predispositions (**Yashodhara et al., 2020**). Socioeconomic context also plays a role, with lifestyle habits, access to healthcare, and education levels having an impact (**Gautam et al., 2023**). Finally, factors related to diabetes itself are not negligible. Type 1 and type 2 diabetes have distinct epidemiologies, and the rate of undiagnosed cases varies considerably across populations (**Pradeepa et al., 2021**).

Similarly to many previous studies (Abdulaziz et al., 2023; Bdulghani et al., 2023), a multivariate logistic regression conducted in the present study to identify factors associated with hyperglycemia revealed that patients with a family history of diabetes were 4.5 times more likely to be significantly associated with hyperglycemia prevalence. This result is consistent with findings from numerous studies conducted in Tanzania (Mlugu et al., 2023; Chandra et al., 2023), Turkey (Öztürk et al., 2022), Ethiopia (Gebretensaie et al., 2023), and Bangladesh (Ahmed et al., 2023). The association between family history and diabetes can be explained by a combination of genetic and environmental factors. On one hand, a genetic predisposition may increase insulin sensitivity or alter glucose metabolism. These susceptibility genes can be passed from generation to generation (Zhuo et al., 2024). On the other hand, sharing a family environment, with similar dietary habits and lifestyles, may promote the development of diabetes, especially in genetically predisposed individuals (Tremblay et al., 2019). Finally, epigenetic mechanisms, which modify gene expression without altering their sequence, may also play a role by increasing the risk of diabetes in descendants (Crosland et al., 2024).

As in many prior studies in Korea (**Kim et al., 2019**), Tanzania (**Mlugu et al., 2023**; **Chandra et al., 2023**), and Turkey (**Öztürk et al., 2022**), the present evidence-based study reported a higher risk (4.1 times) of hyperglycemia among participants who smoked compared to non-smokers. This result contrasts with those of other studies that concluded there was no strong evidence of a direct link between smoking and hyperglycemia. This was the case in studies conducted in Korea (Park et al., 2023), China (**Zhang et al., 2022**), and India (**Kumar et al., 2023**). However, it can be justified by the fact that smoking has a detrimental effect on blood glucose regulation (**Campagna et al., 2019**). Nicotine and toxic substances in cigarettes induce insulin resistance, chronic inflammation, and oxidative stress, thereby impairing the function of insulin-producing pancreatic cells and the ability of cells to utilize glucose (**Tong et al., 2020**). These physiological mechanisms largely explain the increased risk of hyperglycemia among smokers.

Corroborating studies elsewhere that showed central obesity was strongly associated with the risk of mortality due to BMI in type 1 diabetes (**Parente et al., 2021**), and that central obesity and visceral fat were associated with an increased risk of BMI in the general population and people with type 2 diabetes (**Pandey et al., 2018**), the present study indicated that being overweight or obese (BMI between 25 and \geq 30 kg/m²) was a risk factor 1.81 times higher for hyperglycemia. This result can be explained by the well-established links between overweight, obesity, and type 2 diabetes, which are closely associated with insulin resistance, as highlighted in a previous study (**Ruze et al., 2023**). Excess adipose tissue, particularly abdominal fat,

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induces chronic inflammation that impairs cellular insulin sensitivity (**Kawai et al., 2020**). This resistance, combined with pancreatic cell dysfunction, leads to an accumulation of glucose in the blood, characteristic of hyperglycemia.

The last significant result of this study revealed that having hypertension increases the risk of developing hyperglycemia by 1.54 times. This finding is consistent with numerous studies conducted in other contexts. For example, one study showed that hypertension is the most common comorbidity in diabetic patients, with more than two-thirds of people with type 2 diabetes also being hypertensive (**Ferrannini et al., 2012**). Another study demonstrated that hyperglycemia was associated with a higher prevalence of hypertension (**Yan et al., 2016**). Additionally, epidemiological studies have observed that hyperglycemia is frequent among frail elderly hypertensive individuals (**Pansini et al., 2022**). These results can be explained by the close relationship between hypertension and diabetes, which share common risk factors such as obesity and sedentary lifestyles. Moreover, these two conditions tend to exacerbate each other, creating a vicious cycle that is difficult to break (**Hezam et al., 2024**). Hypertension contributes to the development of insulin resistance, while hyperglycemia exacerbates hypertension. These two conditions are linked to chronic inflammation, high oxidative stress, and metabolic dysfunction, forming a vicious cycle (**Masenga et al., 2023**).

The study, conducted at the Franceville Urban Health Center, offers a precise analysis of the prevalence of hyperglycemia and its risk factors in Gabon. By targeting a specific population and using standardized diagnostic criteria (serum analysis and ADA recommendations), the research clearly identified major risk factors, such as family history of diabetes, smoking, overweight/obesity and hypertension. Using robust multivariate analyses, including logistic regression, the study highlights the need for targeted prevention strategies for at-risk individuals in Franceville. These results, valuable for healthcare professionals and decision-makers, contribute to the improvement of diabetes prevention strategies in Gabon.

Study limitations

This study, while providing interesting elements, has some methodological limitations. The study population, recruited from an urban health center, may not be representative of the general population. The sample size, although sufficient to detect some associations, may be limited to identify specific subgroups. Moreover, the exclusive use of fasting blood glucose to diagnose hyperglycemia may underestimate the actual prevalence. Finally, the lack of quantitative assessment of certain risk factors, such as diet and physical activity, limits the interpretation of the results.

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Conclusion:

Our study, conducted with a cohort of patients from the Urban Health Center of Franceville, highlighted a significant prevalence of hyperglycemia, a major risk factor for the development of diabetes. The results obtained corroborate data from the scientific literature, which underscore the alarming increase in the prevalence of diabetes in middle-income countries such as Gabon. More specifically, our analyses have identified several risk factors associated with hyperglycemia, including a family history of diabetes, smoking, overweight/obesity, and hypertension. These results are in line with current knowledge on the determinants of diabetes and constitute a first step in understanding the epidemiology of diabetes in Gabon. They open new research perspectives, particularly on the underlying pathophysiological mechanisms, the impact of genetic factors, and the evaluation of the effectiveness of different prevention and management interventions. Longitudinal and larger-scale studies are needed to refine our knowledge on the subject and improve the management of diabetic patients.

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Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Author's contributions

This study was conceived by HKM and led by TNM and SBN. TNM, GE, LCOE, and EJM collaborated on the study design, data analysis, and drafting of the materials and methods sections. TNM and CSO drafted the initial manuscript, which was then critically reviewed by TNM, HKM, LCOE, CSO, and EJM. All authors contributed to and approved the final manuscript.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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