

Research Article

A Review of The Literature on Knowledge Management in The Field of Health and Wellness: Challenges, Approaches, and New Opportunities

Erfani S and Moinzad H*

Department of Information Technology Management,
Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran. erfani@tbzmed.
ac.ir

*Corresponding author: Hossien Moinzad,
Department of Information Technology Management,
Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

Email: moinzad@iauctb.ac.ir

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Abstract

Introduction and Objective: Knowledge Management (KM) has become a vital component in the healthcare sector, enabling organizations to improve service quality, enhance decision-making, and foster innovation. This review article aims to synthesize the existing literature on knowledge management in the health and wellness domain, focusing on challenges, new approaches, and opportunities. By examining insights from recent studies, this article provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of knowledge management in healthcare and offers recommendations for future research and practice.

Methods: This study utilized a library search method and databases, reviewing published resources from 2015 to 2024 that are available both domestically and internationally. It focused on relevant literature by searching with keywords related to knowledge management in health and wellness, challenges, approaches, and new opportunities. Articles were collected from databases such as Google Scholar, PubMed, Web of Science, and ScienceDirect.

Findings: The findings of this review emphasize the need for a global definition of innovative approaches and opportunities using new technologies, including artificial intelligence, in the field of health and wellness, which encompasses the unique complexities and challenges in this area.

Conclusion: To succeed in fostering innovation in the health sector, it is essential to create an inclusive organizational culture that carefully addresses the following key components: team challenges, communication and collaboration, governance objectives, and credible leadership.

Keywords: Knowledge management; Health and wellness; Challenges; Innovative opportunities; Information technology; Artificial intelligence

Introduction

The healthcare sector and, more broadly, human health service systems are one of the key areas in contemporary societies, where their performance and quality heavily depend on the exchange and sharing of knowledge among all stakeholders. To provide effective and high-quality services to patients, collaboration among doctors, nurses, researchers, and other health and wellness professionals is essential. This collaboration not only involves the exchange of clinical information but also includes sharing standardized operational procedures [1]. The treatment of each patient relies on access to a wealth of relevant knowledge and expertise. Especially in a context where medical science is continuously evolving and advancing, with the emergence of new research and innovative treatment methods, the need for updating information is felt more than ever [2]. In general, the exchange of knowledge among members of the treatment team can lead to improved treatment outcomes and a reduction in medical errors [3].

On the other hand, informing and creating collaborative networks can facilitate the learning process and help achieve best practices. In this way, healthcare providers can not only benefit from each other's experiences but also contribute to improving the quality of services provided to patients [4].

Solving problems and making informed decisions in healthcare is heavily dependent on access to knowledge. In today's complex and changing environment, effective management of both internal and external knowledge is crucial for healthcare organizations to provide the best health services, operational excellence, and innovation. Knowledge management is a process that organizations and individuals use to find, store, retrieve, share, adapt, and utilize knowledge to achieve their goals [5].

Organizations have realized that to survive in a dynamic environment, they must effectively leverage their knowledge.

Knowledge management in the healthcare sector can help identify new challenges and opportunities and provide innovative approaches to enhance community health. This, in turn, will lead to the overall advancement of health and treatment systems, and in addition, it can achieve high treatment standards alongside improved service quality, which contributes to patient satisfaction and public health improvement [6].

Knowledge management began in the early 1990s [7] and includes principles, tools, and practices that enable individuals to create, share, translate, and apply knowledge to generate value and improve effectiveness. Knowledge management plays a significant role in various organizations, including healthcare, industries, educational institutions, and government, and has the potential to enhance competitive advantage [8].

Knowledge management, as a key approach to improving the performance of organizations and businesses, presents challenges and complexities from various dimensions. It is essential to note that knowledge management programs are not only difficult and costly but also require a deep understanding of the true value of these programs for their proper acceptance and implementation [9].

Previous research results have shown that in the healthcare sector, the impacts and performance of knowledge management have been examined from various perspectives. Knowledge management has been linked to healthcare functions such as management, finance, patient care, quality and safety, information technology, continuous improvement of clinical operations, and organizational culture. However, the impacts of knowledge management also extend to employee performance, job satisfaction, learning, knowledge distribution, and productivity [10]. Furthermore, special attention to the use of technologies for managing organizational and individual knowledge both within and outside healthcare organizations is essential. In general, information and communication technology is valuable for supporting and expanding knowledge management processes to enhance the effectiveness and quality of healthcare services [11].

It has also been identified that the major challenges that can impact the knowledge management framework for knowledge sharing practices in the health sectors include limited awareness, time, and security. In addition to these challenges, the knowledge management framework for knowledge sharing practices in the health sectors presents opportunities such as improved care quality, collaboration, innovation, and a reduction in medical errors [12].

To implement the concept of knowledge management, having a precise theoretical framework for developing a knowledge management system for any institution dealing with knowledge can be very beneficial, serving as a guide to reduce their efforts and time in implementing and developing knowledge management [13]. The primary healthcare system, as one of the fundamental pillars of health service delivery, faces numerous challenges in the face of pandemics. In times of health crises, the weaknesses and deficiencies of this system become clearly evident, which can undermine its responsiveness and reduce the quality of services. Among these challenges are financial resource shortages, the lack of efficient information systems, and the lack of coordination among various entities. It seems that health

policymakers, by employing knowledge management strategies, will be able to strengthen the healthcare system and public health of the community [14].

This study, through a review of published articles in the field of knowledge management, aims to investigate and respond to the following questions:

- What are the challenges that limit the implementation of knowledge management in the health and healthcare sector?
- What approaches exist for knowledge management in the health and healthcare sector?
- What new opportunities are available for knowledge management in the health and healthcare sector?

The main objective of this review is to examine the literature on knowledge management in the health and healthcare sector. In this context, the challenges, approaches, and new opportunities present in this field will be analyzed.

Methodology

This study employed a library search and database search methodology, reviewing resources and articles published within the timeframe of 2015 to 2024, available both domestically and internationally, and relevant to the topic. The search utilized keywords related to knowledge management in the health and healthcare sector, challenges, approaches, and novel opportunities. This process yielded access to and collection of 760 English articles from databases including Google Scholar, PubMed, Web of Science, and ScienceDirect. Of these retrieved documents, 522 were journal articles, 35 were conference papers, and the remaining documents were in the format of books, theses, reports, etc. Furthermore, the Persian databases SID and Magiran were searched, resulting in the review and study of 35 articles.

Discussion

Knowledge Management

Despite the high value of knowledge, the existence of a vast amount of information and data can pose a significant challenge for employees in the healthcare sector. Employees may become confused amidst the abundance of information and resources, struggling to know where to begin their search. This situation not only hinders their optimal productivity but can also lead to increased stress and burnout. The importance of knowledge organization in the health and healthcare field is therefore amplified, because knowledge that is not accessible when needed is worthless. Organizations face various challenges in planning and implementing effective knowledge management strategies and practices. There are growing concerns from researchers and participants alike in identifying factors that can accelerate or reduce the effectiveness of knowledge management processes [15].

The Importance of Knowledge Management in the Healthcare Sector

Knowledge Management (KM) is essential in healthcare due to the complexity and dynamic nature of the field. KM helps healthcare organizations make more informed decisions through information sharing. These systems allow professionals to access accurate and up-

to-date information, leading to better diagnoses and increased patient safety. The benefits of KM in healthcare, especially in healthcare delivery, are numerous. Proper documentation of knowledge and adherence to standard medical procedures are cornerstones of improving the quality of healthcare services. Knowledge management facilitates knowledge exchange among healthcare teams, improves organizational performance, and supports continuous improvement in clinical operations [10,16,17].

Reduction of Clinical Errors: When physicians follow documented processes and standard procedures, the likelihood of errors in diagnosis and treatment is significantly reduced. This is especially important in situations where clinical decisions must be made quickly [18].

Team Cohesion: Knowledge documentation allows physicians to access statistics and previous experiences of other specialists. This exchange of knowledge and experience helps improve the diagnosis and treatment process, enabling physicians to use each other's valuable experiences in similar situations, ultimately leading to improved quality of medical care [19].

Quality of Healthcare Services: Adherence to documented procedures also impacts the delivery of higher quality services. Research indicates that better implementation of clinical guidelines, along with regular documentation, leads to more effective and successful healthcare services, which benefits patients [20].

Improved Documentation: Numerous studies emphasize the importance of complete and accurate documentation of treatment outcomes and therapeutic methods. This not only enhances the quality of healthcare services but also prevents potential future problems and complications [21]. Considering these points, it can be concluded that accurate knowledge documentation and adherence to standard procedures, as a key strategy in modern medicine, can positively impact the quality of medical care and reduce errors.

Challenges of Implementing Knowledge Management in Healthcare

Knowledge management, as a strategic approach in organizations, faces numerous challenges and complexities. These challenges can be examined in several dimensions:

Infrastructure and Financial Challenges: Despite its importance, knowledge management in healthcare faces several challenges. One of the main obstacles is the lack of robust IT infrastructure, which hinders effective knowledge sharing and management [16]. Implementing knowledge management as a key element in improving organizational performance requires significant investment in infrastructure and information technologies. These investments are not only financially burdensome but can also expose organizations to financial risks. Furthermore, the high costs of implementing these systems may cause hesitation in allocating the necessary resources to these projects. Insufficient resource allocation to knowledge management programs can significantly impact their progress. When organizations are deprived of the necessary tools to support effective knowledge management practices, their efficiency and productivity decrease, and they ultimately lose the ability to compete in the market [22].

Cultural and Social Challenges: One of the key factors in resistance to change is a lack of motivation among employees. When employees view new technologies as disruptive or time-consuming, they are less likely to adopt and use these tools. This attitude can lead to reduced efficiency and a lack of effective engagement with knowledge management systems. In other words, if employees do not perceive the real and practical benefits of new changes, they are likely to resist their implementation [23]. Cultural and social factors, such as resistance to change and distrust among team members, can disrupt knowledge management initiatives [24].

Organizational and Structural Challenges: In today's world, organizations face numerous challenges in the field of knowledge management. One of these challenges is the use of outdated and inefficient systems. These systems, which have lost their effectiveness due to a lack of alignment with current needs and modern technologies, hinder the sharing and effective use of knowledge. In fact, such a system can lead to confusion, reduced productivity, and ultimately organizational failure [25]. On the other hand, hierarchical structures in organizations also act as a limiting factor in the free flow of information. These structures, which are based on hierarchy and formal arrangements, often prevent the rapid and dynamic exchange of information between different levels. Especially in times when there is a need for immediate decision-making and collaboration between departments, these limitations can create serious obstacles in work processes [26].

Performance and Evaluation Challenges: Organizations inevitably need to continuously evaluate their performance and effectively utilize knowledge management to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage. This process requires a thorough and in-depth analysis of information related to the organization's performance. However, performance evaluation is a complex and time-consuming task that requires the cooperation of all stakeholders, as well as the use of advanced analytical tools. In this regard, knowledge management acts as a key tool in improving evaluation processes, enabling organizations to leverage their past experiences and implement continuous improvements in their strategies [27]. One of the major challenges in this area is the quality of information and its connection to knowledge assets. Ensuring the accuracy and precision of data is of utmost importance, especially when implementing evaluation strategies. Any deficiency or inaccuracy in the information can lead to inappropriate decision-making and serious misunderstandings, which will ultimately negatively impact the organization's performance. Therefore, it is essential to employ optimal methods and standardize the processes of collecting, analyzing, and presenting information to improve data quality [28].

Human and Educational Challenges: With the emergence of digital platforms and the expansion of data sources, managers are increasingly faced with a difficult challenge: filtering and extracting relevant knowledge from the vast amount of information. In today's world, data is readily available, but selecting the correct and useful information from it has become a critical skill. Managers need to use data analysis and artificial intelligence techniques to identify patterns and extract key insights. This process not only helps improve decision-making but can also provide a significant competitive advantage [29]. Time constraints and limited skills are also significant challenges, as

healthcare professionals typically have heavy workloads that leave little time for knowledge-sharing activities [24]. On the other hand, barriers to knowledge sharing, such as information silos and limited collaboration, can severely restrict an organization's ability to learn from each other and perform effectively. In many organizations, information is trapped within different departments, leading to reduced collaboration and communication between teams. To overcome these challenges, organizations need to foster a culture of collaboration and utilize digital tools to facilitate knowledge exchange. By breaking down silos and strengthening intra-organizational communication, organizations can achieve continuous learning and optimize their performance [30].

New Approaches to Implementing Knowledge Management in Healthcare

To overcome these challenges, several new approaches to knowledge management have been proposed:

Utilizing Information Technology Tools: To overcome these challenges, several new approaches to knowledge management have been proposed. One promising strategy is the use of information technology (IT) tools such as electronic health records (EHRs) and clinical decision support systems (CDSSs), which can facilitate the dissemination and application of knowledge in healthcare settings [8]. Another approach is the implementation of Lean and Six Sigma (LSS) methodologies, which can optimize processes and improve the efficiency of knowledge management practices [31].

Evidence-Based Approaches: Evidence-based approaches (EBM) as a scientific model in healthcare delivery, have a significant impact on improving quality and reducing costs. The use of credible evidence and scientific experiences in clinical decision-making enables professionals to provide more effective treatments to patients [32].

Futures Studies: As an interdisciplinary field, futures studies enable researchers and managers to identify future needs and challenges using analytical and forecasting methods. In today's world, facing rapid technological advancements, social, and economic changes, the necessity of futures studies in the knowledge management process is undeniably crucial. Futures studies methods allow us to gain a comprehensive and realistic view of future developments by analyzing existing data and simulating probable scenarios. This process not only helps identify new challenges and needs but also enables organizations to design appropriate strategies to address these challenges. Creating models for knowledge management based on these predictions can lead to improved processes and enhanced organizational efficiency. For example, organizations can update their knowledge management programs and allocate resources more efficiently by identifying future educational and specialized needs [33].

Using Social Media for Health Knowledge Management: Social media has emerged as a powerful tool for health knowledge management, offering opportunities for health promotion, public health education, and decision-making support. Platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn have been used to disseminate health-related information, facilitate knowledge sharing, and raise health awareness. However, the use of social media for knowledge management is not without challenges, including privacy concerns, ethical issues, and the difficulty of managing negative comments [34].

Adoption of Big Data and Artificial Intelligence in Knowledge Management: The integration of big data and artificial intelligence (AI) in knowledge management has transformed how knowledge is managed in healthcare organizations. Big data technologies enable the capture, organization, and analysis of vast amounts of health data, while AI algorithms can extract insights and support decision-making. For example, AI-based systems have been used to identify and classify diseases, such as hypertension and cerebral hemorrhage, using medical records and imaging data [35]. These technologies have the potential to enhance the quality and safety of care by providing timely and accurate information to healthcare professionals.

Knowledge Sharing Interventions: Knowledge sharing interventions have been identified as a vital component of effective knowledge management in the healthcare sector. These interventions, which include communities of practice, clinical decision support systems, and advanced care planning, facilitate the dissemination of knowledge and promote collaboration among healthcare professionals [8,36]. For example, communities of practice have been shown to enhance knowledge sharing and improve clinical outcomes by providing a platform for healthcare professionals to share experiences and best practices [8].

New Opportunities for Implementing Knowledge Management in the Healthcare Sector

Implementing knowledge management in the healthcare sector presents new opportunities that can contribute to improving the quality of services and efficiency in this industry. Some of these opportunities include:

Strengthening Evidence-Based Decision Making: One of the most important opportunities in knowledge management is strengthening evidence-based decision making in the field of health care. The use of knowledge management tools, such as clinical decision support systems and electronic health records, enables health care professionals to access relevant knowledge at the point of service delivery, thereby improving the quality of decisions [8,37]. This is particularly significant in the context of population health management, where knowledge management can support the development of targeted interventions and improve health outcomes [38].

Support for Integrated Care Systems: The integration of social health and care systems has been identified as a key priority in many countries, and knowledge management plays a vital role in this process. By facilitating knowledge sharing and promoting collaboration among health and social care professionals, knowledge management can support the development of integrated care systems. For example, the use of shared information structures and common regional strategies can enhance coordination and decision-making in various care environments [39].

Promotion of Data-Driven Care Planning: Increased access to health data has created opportunities for data-driven care planning in the healthcare sector. Knowledge management systems can analyse large volumes of data, identify patterns, predict outcomes, and inform care planning [40]. For example, the use of machine learning algorithms to analyse medical records and imaging data has the potential to improve the accuracy of diagnoses and treatment regimens [40].

Integrating Knowledge Management (KM) with other management practices, such as Strategic Knowledge Management (SKM) and Intellectual Capital (IC), offers significant opportunities for improving health outcomes. SKM can enhance the alignment of KM initiatives with organizational goals, while IC can provide a framework for measuring the impact of KM on organizational performance [41].

Creating Knowledge Networks: The Role of Knowledge Management in Medical Collaborations: Utilizing Communities of Practice (CoPs) and knowledge-sharing networks can foster collaboration and innovation among healthcare professionals [8,42]. Knowledge management, as a strategic approach in various fields, particularly in medical sciences, enables the creation and strengthening of internal and international knowledge networks. These networks provide physicians and nurses with the opportunity to share their experiences, achievements, and information packages with each other. One of the major benefits of creating these networks is facilitating the transfer of knowledge and information. In the medical world, we face new challenges and unknown diseases every day. Knowledge networks can serve as a key resource for research, education, and discussion about these challenges. For example, when a physician in one country encounters innovative treatment methods or new research in the face of a specific disease, they can share this knowledge with their counterparts in other parts of the world. Furthermore, international knowledge networks lead to multilateral collaborations that ultimately enhance the quality of healthcare services. These collaborations can contribute to improving treatment protocols, sharing clinical data, and developing innovative educational methods [43].

Improving Clinical Decision-Making: With advancements in technology and the expansion of access to information, the healthcare system has undergone significant positive changes. Immediate access to the information and knowledge required by healthcare providers enables them to make better decisions, thereby enhancing the quality of patient care. Medical information, ranging from the results of scientific research and clinical guidelines to hospital data and medical records, can all contribute to more accurate clinical decision-making. For instance, access to precise and up-to-date databases regarding medications, side effects, and drug interactions can assist physicians in prescribing more appropriate treatments. This information not only helps doctors make better real-time decisions but also reflects a higher level of attention and care for patients [44].

Coordination of Patient Care: Knowledge management in the healthcare sector plays a key role in improving the quality of patient care. One of the most important aspects of this issue is the coordination of various processes related to patient care. This management specifically pertains to scheduling appointments and transferring vital information to patients and relevant healthcare providers. The first step in this regard is to create a cohesive system for collecting and storing information from various sources. This information includes patients' medical histories, test results, prescriptions, and specific needs of the patients. With access to a complete and accurate database, providers can retrieve necessary information at any time and make better decisions in the treatment process. Furthermore, knowledge management facilitates communication between patients

and healthcare providers. By utilizing modern tools such as online appointment scheduling systems and medical record management software, patients can easily schedule their appointments and share any essential information with doctors and the treatment team. This not only reduces patients' waiting times but also helps prevent medical errors [45].

Professional Development of Staff: Knowledge management plays a significant role in the training and development of staff and is recognized as a key factor in improving organizational performance. This management facilitates the processes of collecting, organizing, sharing, and applying knowledge, enabling a clear definition of the educational and developmental needs of employees. By using knowledge management techniques, organizations can identify the skills and knowledge present within themselves and can design effective training programs to enhance employees' capabilities. These programs provide a platform for employees to continuously learn and progress, keeping pace with changes in the work environment. Additionally, knowledge management helps facilitate internal communications. By sharing experiences and achievements, employees not only learn from each other but also contribute to creating a positive and collaborative atmosphere within the organization. This has a direct impact on their motivation and job satisfaction, leading employees to engage more enthusiastically in their work and contribute to improving organizational outcomes [46].

Improving Operations and Processes: Knowledge management is recognized as a key tool in enhancing the performance of organizations across various fields. In the context of healthcare, this concept is particularly significant, as effective communication and collaboration among healthcare teams can have a direct impact on the quality of services provided to patients. By employing knowledge management strategies, healthcare teams can effectively collect, organize, and share past information and experiences. This enables team members to access technical knowledge and the successful experiences of others, thereby facilitating decision-making processes and leading to better service delivery. Furthermore, it fosters the establishment of a positive organizational culture where continuous learning and collaboration are valued [47].

Creating a Culture of Learning and Innovation: One of the major advantages of knowledge management in HSE is the promotion of a learning culture within the organization. By collecting and sharing experiences and knowledge related to safety and health, employees will be able to learn from past mistakes and adopt more effective preventive measures in this area. This process not only helps reduce workplace accidents and injuries but also enhances credibility and confidence within the organization. Furthermore, knowledge management lays the groundwork for innovation in work methods and safety technologies. By analysing the collected data and information, organizations can identify weaknesses in current systems and propose new innovations in safety and health. This approach improves the quality of the work environment and enhances employee health, which in turn increases organizational productivity. Ultimately, it can be said that knowledge management in the HSE domain contributes to fostering a culture of learning and innovation within the organization by identifying hazards and opportunities for improvement. This process not only leads to maintaining safety and

Table 1: Key Insights from the Literature.

Aspect	Description	Citation
Innovation in Healthcare	KM fosters innovation by improving decision-making and service quality.	[17,49]
Challenges in KM	Cultural, technical, and communication barriers hinder KM implementation.	[24,51]
New Approaches	Social media, big data, and AI are transforming KM in healthcare.	[34,50]
Opportunities	KM enhances evidence-based decision-making and supports integrated care systems.	[8,39]

Table 2: Key Insights from the Literature.

Key Factors	Tools/Strategies	Outcomes
Organizational Factors	Leadership support, IT infrastructure, and knowledge-sharing culture	Improved decision-making, enhanced collaboration, and better patient outcomes
Individual Factors	Training, incentives for knowledge sharing, and individual commitment	Increased job satisfaction, improved productivity, and better knowledge retention
Information System Factors	Electronic health records, clinical decision support systems, and knowledge management software	Streamlined processes, improved accuracy, and enhanced knowledge dissemination
Knowledge Management Tools	Communities of practice, knowledge-sharing networks, and digital platforms	Fostered innovation, improved communication, and increased knowledge utilization
Lean and Six Sigma (LSS)	Process improvement methodologies, waste reduction, and patient-centric processes	Improved quality performance, reduced costs, and enhanced patient satisfaction

improving organizational performance but can also be considered a key factor in ensuring the long-term success of the organization in the future [48] (Table 1 and 2).

Conclusion

To achieve sustainable competitive advantage through performance evaluation, continuous efforts are required to improve the quality of information and knowledge management. Organizations must actively pursue the creation of a culture of learning and continuous improvement to capitalize on available opportunities and be adequately prepared for new challenges. Promoting and implementing evidence-based approaches in healthcare not only leads to improved service quality but also holds significant economic value. This approach is key to achieving an efficient and effective healthcare system that delivers favourable outcomes for society.

The integration of futures studies with knowledge management can lead to a pioneering and comprehensive approach that enables organizations to make the best use of their capacities in the face of rapid changes and ongoing challenges, moving towards sustainable progress. Knowledge management has facilitated the creation of effective networks among doctors and nurses, enhancing their professional capacities. These networks not only assist in the exchange of knowledge and experiences but also strengthen the spirit of collaboration and cooperation among health professionals. In such an environment, facing new challenges becomes not only possible but also a smoother path. Immediate access to medical information and knowledge not only improves decision-making processes in healthcare but also enhances the quality of patient care and increases their satisfaction. In the modern world, where information is rapidly accessible, the effective use of these resources has become a crucial necessity for improving the healthcare system. Future research should focus on developing more comprehensive models of knowledge management (KM) that integrate multiple perspectives and address the complex challenges faced by health organizations. Additionally, there is a need for more empirical studies that evaluate the impact of KM initiatives on patient outcomes and organizational performance. By addressing these gaps, researchers and practitioners can collaborate to create more effective KM strategies that enhance the quality and efficiency of healthcare services. As a result, KM plays a vital role in the healthcare sector and offers numerous benefits for improving

patient care and organizational performance. However, the successful implementation of KM initiatives requires addressing several challenges, including the need for robust information technology infrastructure, cultural barriers, and time constraints. By leveraging new approaches and opportunities, such as IT tools, Lean Six Sigma (LSS) methods, and Social Knowledge Management (SKM), health organizations can overcome these challenges and achieve their goals. Future research should focus on developing comprehensive KM models and evaluating the impact of KM initiatives on health outcomes. This table provides a summary of the key factors, tools, and outcomes related to KM in healthcare, highlighting the importance of a multifaceted approach to achieving successful KM initiatives.

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