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Paramedicine And EMS Networks In Trauma And Anesthesia Care: An Integrated Psychophysiological And Sociological Perspective — A Scoping Review

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Abstract

Background:
Paramedicine and emergency medical services (EMS) have become critical contributors to trauma and anesthesia care, yet the literature addressing their integrated clinical, psychophysiological, and sociological roles remains fragmented. Understanding how these factors interact is essential for optimizing preoperative decision-making, airway management, and trauma system performance.

Objectives:
This scoping review aims to map evidence on how paramedicine and EMS networks contribute to trauma and anesthesia care through clinical interventions, psychophysiological mechanisms, and sociological dynamics across prehospital and hospital settings.

Methods:
The review followed the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) guidelines and the PRISMA-ScR checklist. A comprehensive search was conducted across PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, CINAHL, EMBASE, PsycINFO, and Sociological Abstracts. Eligible studies included empirical research, reviews, and conceptual papers (2000–2025) addressing EMS involvement in trauma or anesthesia and examining clinical, psychophysiological, or sociological constructs.

Results:
Findings demonstrate that paramedics significantly influence early trauma and anesthesia outcomes through advanced airway management, hemorrhage control, analgesia, and structured triage. Psychophysiological factors—such as stress, cognitive load, and situational awareness—were strongly associated with decision-making accuracy and procedural performance. Sociological determinants, including teamwork, communication quality, hierarchy, and organizational culture, shaped the effectiveness of EMS–hospital transitions and perioperative coordination. Integrated trauma systems with formal EMS–anesthesia pathways showed improved readiness and reduced perioperative delays.

Conclusion:
Trauma and anesthesia care are governed by an interplay of clinical expertise, human-factor physiology, and sociological structures. Paramedicine serves as the foundational link in this continuum, influencing

both immediate interventions and downstream surgical planning. Strengthening interdisciplinary communication, enhancing stress-management and clinical training, and embedding EMS roles within trauma–anesthesia pathways may improve patient outcomes and system efficiency.

Keywords Paramedicine; Emergency Medical Services; Trauma Systems; Prehospital Care; Anesthesia; Psychophysiology; Cognitive Load; Situational Awareness; Interprofessional Communication; Sociological Dynamics; Stress Physiology; Airway Management; Perioperative Care.

Introduction

Paramedicine and emergency medical services (EMS) have evolved substantially over the past two decades, transitioning from basic transport-focused operations to highly coordinated, clinically advanced systems capable of providing critical care interventions at the scene and during transport. This transformation is particularly evident in trauma and anesthesia-related emergencies, where rapid psychophysiological assessment, timely airway management, and coordinated decision-making between prehospital and in-hospital teams significantly influence patient survival and functional recovery (Häske et al., 2022; Møller et al., 2023). As global health systems adopt integrated trauma networks, paramedics now serve as frontline providers whose actions bridge the crucial preoperative, perioperative, and operative phases of care—especially in high-acuity events involving hemorrhage, traumatic brain injury, and respiratory compromise.

Beyond the biomedical dimension, trauma and anesthesia care in EMS settings are shaped by psychophysiological factors, including stress responses, cognitive load, situational awareness, and decision-making under pressure. Research indicates that paramedics' cognitive performance, heart-rate variability, and stress-induced attentional shifts directly influence the speed and accuracy of airway interventions, pain management, and triage prioritization (Lauria et al., 2019; Crowe et al., 2020). At the same time, sociological determinants—such as teamwork, power dynamics, interprofessional communication, and organizational culture—affect coordination between paramedics, emergency physicians, anesthetists, and trauma surgeons (Wankhade & Murphy, 2018). These sociological elements form the backbone of functional trauma networks, shaping information flow, trust formation, and collaborative decision-making during high-pressure resuscitations.

Despite the recognized importance of EMS–hospital integration, literature remains fragmented, with studies scattered across trauma medicine, prehospital anesthesia, psychophysiology, and medical sociology. Existing reviews tend to focus on isolated domains—such as airway interventions, simulation training, stress physiology, or interprofessional communication—without providing a unified multidisciplinary framework. As trauma systems become increasingly complex, there is a growing need to map how paramedicine and EMS networks integrate biomedical care with psychophysiological and sociological perspectives to optimize patient outcomes across the trauma–anesthesia continuum.

Therefore, this scoping review aims to comprehensively map the evidence on how paramedicine and EMS networks contribute to trauma and anesthesia care, highlighting the interplay between clinical decision-making, psychophysiological responses, and sociological dynamics. By synthesizing diverse streams of literature, the review seeks to clarify conceptual boundaries, identify knowledge gaps, and propose future directions for integrated prehospital and anesthesia-related trauma care.

Problem Statement

Although trauma and anesthesia care have undergone major advancements, the integration between paramedicine, EMS networks, and hospital-based trauma–anesthesia teams remains inconsistently addressed in the literature. Current evidence is dispersed across multiple disciplines—prehospital care, trauma systems, psychophysiology, and medical sociology—making it difficult to understand how these domains collectively influence patient outcomes during high-acuity emergencies. Existing studies typically focus on a single dimension such as airway management, stress physiology, or communication patterns, without presenting a comprehensive framework that unifies the psychophysiological and sociological factors shaping paramedic performance and interprofessional cooperation within trauma networks. This fragmentation limits the ability of clinicians, policymakers, and EMS administrators to

design effective training programs, strengthen trauma system integration, and optimize perioperative decision-making.

Rationale for the Review

A scoping review is warranted because the interdisciplinary nature of trauma–anesthesia care involves a complex interaction between biomedical, psychological, and sociological elements that cannot be captured through traditional systematic or narrative reviews. Trauma outcomes are strongly influenced by prehospital interventions—such as early airway control, hemorrhage management, analgesia, and rapid transport—yet these clinical actions are equally shaped by paramedics' cognitive load, stress responses, situational awareness, and team communication dynamics (Lauria et al., 2019; Wankhade & Murphy, 2018). EMS networks also vary across regions, creating differences in protocols, interprofessional boundaries, anesthesia access, and trauma team activation pathways. Given these variations, a comprehensive mapping of the evidence is essential to clarify what is known, where gaps exist, and how interdisciplinary integration can improve trauma and anesthesia outcomes.

This review will therefore identify, categorize, and synthesize the available evidence across biomedical, psychophysiological, and sociological domains, offering the first structured attempt to delineate how paramedicine and EMS networks contribute to trauma and anesthesia care through a unified theoretical lens. The results will serve as a foundation for advancing research, guiding policy development, and improving real-world clinical practice in trauma systems.

Study Objectives

This scoping review aims to systematically map the existing evidence on how paramedicine and EMS networks contribute to trauma and anesthesia care from an integrated psychophysiological and sociological perspective. The specific objectives are to:

1. Identify the current roles, responsibilities, and clinical contributions of paramedics and EMS teams in trauma and anesthesia-related emergencies.
2. Examine psychophysiological factors—such as stress response, cognitive load, situational awareness, and decision-making—that influence paramedic performance during trauma and anesthesia care.
3. Analyze sociological determinants, including teamwork dynamics, communication pathways, interprofessional collaboration, and organizational culture within EMS–hospital trauma networks.
4. Map how existing trauma systems integrate EMS-based interventions with perioperative and anesthetic care across prehospital, ED, and operating-room phases.
5. Identify knowledge gaps and propose areas for future interdisciplinary research in paramedicine-centered trauma and anesthesia care

Methodology

Methods

This scoping review will be conducted in accordance with the methodological guidance of the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) for scoping reviews and the PRISMA-ScR reporting framework (Tricco et al., 2018). The purpose of the review is to systematically map the breadth and characteristics of existing evidence on how paramedicine and EMS networks contribute to trauma and anesthesia care, with specific attention to psychophysiological and sociological dimensions.

1. Study Design

A scoping review design was selected given the multidisciplinary nature of the topic, which spans trauma care, anesthesia, prehospital medicine, psychophysiology, and medical sociology. The literature in these domains is diverse in methodology, clinical context, and theoretical orientation. A scoping review is therefore appropriate for examining the extent and range of available evidence, synthesizing conceptual linkages across fields, and identifying gaps that warrant further investigation.

2. Eligibility Criteria (PCC Framework)

Population (P)

Eligible studies will involve one or more of the following professional groups:
• Paramedics
• EMS personnel
• Prehospital critical care providers
• Trauma teams
• Emergency anesthetists
• Perioperative professionals engaged in trauma-related care

Concept (C)

Studies must address at least one relevant concept, including:
• Roles of paramedicine and EMS in trauma or anesthesia-related emergencies
• Psychophysiological factors such as stress, fatigue, cognitive load, decision-making, or situational awareness
• Sociological factors such as teamwork, communication, hierarchy, interprofessional coordination, and EMS–hospital interface
• Integrated models linking EMS with trauma and anesthesia systems
• Prehospital practices influencing anesthesia or operative outcomes

Context (C)

Eligible contexts include:
• Prehospital environments
• Emergency departments
• Trauma networks
• Operating room handovers
• Acute perioperative settings related to trauma

Inclusion Criteria

• Empirical studies (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods)
• Literature reviews, theoretical articles, and conceptual frameworks
• Simulation research and observational EMS performance analyses
• Studies from any country with relevant EMS or trauma systems
• Publications in English
• Studies published between 2000–2025

Exclusion Criteria

• Research unrelated to EMS, trauma, anesthesia, or psychophysiological/sociological constructs
• Pediatric anesthesia studies not related to trauma
• Studies conducted entirely outside prehospital or ED contexts with no EMS component
• Opinion pieces with no scientific evidence
• Animal studies

3. Search Strategy

A comprehensive search will be conducted across the following databases:
• PubMed/MEDLINE
• Scopus
• Web of Science
• CINAHL
• EMBASE
• PsycINFO
• Sociological Abstracts

Grey literature will be sourced from:
• World Health Organization (WHO) publications
• Trauma system and accreditation reports (e.g., ACS, NHS)
• EMS clinical guidelines and training manuals

An example search string is:
("paramedic*" OR "EMS" OR "prehospital care" OR "emergency medical services")
AND ("trauma" OR "injury" OR "trauma system" OR "major trauma")
AND ("anesthesia" OR "airway management" OR "perioperative")
AND ("stress" OR "cognitive load" OR "psychophysiology" OR "situational awareness")
AND ("teamwork" OR "communication" OR "interprofessional" OR "sociology" OR "organizational culture").

Search strings will be tailored for each database and peer-reviewed using the PRESS checklist.

4. Selection Process

• All retrieved citations will be imported into EndNote or Zotero for duplicate removal.
• Two independent reviewers will screen titles and abstracts based on predefined criteria.
• Full texts of potentially eligible studies will be assessed for inclusion.
• Discrepancies will be resolved through discussion or adjudication by a third reviewer.

The selection process will be documented in a PRISMA-ScR flow diagram.

5. Data Charting (Extraction)

A standardized extraction form will be developed to capture:
• Author(s), year, and country
• Study design and clinical setting
• EMS system type or configuration
• Trauma or anesthesia focus
• Reported EMS or paramedic interventions
• Examined psychophysiological variables
• Sociological or organizational characteristics
• Main findings and thematic outcomes
• Implications for practice
• Identified research gaps

6. Synthesis of Results

Because scoping reviews do not aim to evaluate effect sizes, data synthesis will involve:

- **Descriptive mapping** of study characteristics
- **Thematic synthesis** to categorize findings into:

1. Clinical contributions
2. Psychophysiological mechanisms
3. Sociological/organizational factors
4. Integrated trauma–anesthesia pathways

- **Conceptual mapping** to illustrate interrelationships among the themes
- Highlighting knowledge gaps in EMS–trauma–anesthesia integration

No meta-analysis will be conducted due to expected heterogeneity.

7. Ethics and Dissemination

As this study relies on previously published literature, ethics approval is not required. Findings will be disseminated through peer-reviewed publication and may inform EMS training, trauma system protocols, and interprofessional collaboration framework.

Results and Discussion

Results and Integrated Discussion

1. Overview of Included Studies

The search identified a broad and heterogeneous body of literature spanning trauma medicine, EMS operations, prehospital anesthesia, psychophysiology, and medical sociology. The majority of studies were published after 2010, coinciding with global modernization of EMS systems and expanded paramedic scope of practice. Research designs included observational cohorts, qualitative interviews, simulation-based studies, cross-sectional surveys, and conceptual analyses addressing interprofessional coordination and organizational culture.

Collectively, the evidence demonstrates that trauma and anesthesia care in EMS contexts is shaped by the interplay of clinical competencies, human psychophysiological responses, and sociological structures within trauma networks.

Table 1 provides a comprehensive overview of the empirical and conceptual evidence addressing the clinical, psychophysiological, and sociological dimensions of paramedicine within trauma and anesthesia care pathways. The included studies demonstrate substantial variability in research designs, EMS system structures, and clinical contexts, yet several consistent patterns emerge. Clinically, evidence highlights the critical role of paramedics in early airway management, hemorrhage control, analgesia, and trauma triage, with direct implications for perioperative decision-making. Psychophysiological studies underscore the influence of stress, fatigue, and cognitive load on procedural accuracy and decision-making quality, emphasizing the need for targeted training and human-factors interventions. Sociological and organizational research further reveals that communication quality, hierarchical dynamics, and system-level coordination significantly shape the effectiveness of EMS–hospital transitions and anesthesia preparedness.

Taken together, the studies in Table 1 illustrate a multidimensional framework in which clinical actions, human-factor physiology, and organizational structures interact to determine trauma outcomes. The table highlights both areas of strong evidence—such as airway management and stress impacts—and gaps that remain underexplored, including comparative analyses across EMS models and integrated trauma–anesthesia pathways.

Table 1 summarizes the breadth of existing evidence linking paramedicine with trauma and anesthesia care. The included studies collectively show that paramedics influence early airway control, analgesia, hemorrhage management, and triage accuracy, while their performance is shaped by stress, cognitive load, and situational awareness. The table also highlights the sociological determinants—such as communication, hierarchy, and teamwork—that impact EMS–hospital integration and perioperative coordination. Overall, the table reflects the multidimensional nature of trauma–anesthesia systems and identifies several gaps requiring further interdisciplinary research.

Table 1. Summary of Included Studies (2000–2025)

Relevance to This Review	Key Findings	Focus Area	Population	Study Design	Country	Author (Year)
Highlights clinical contributions of paramedics in early anesthesia-relevant airway control.	Supraglottic devices & prehospital intubation improved early oxygenation; outcomes varied	Prehospital airway management	Paramedics, trauma patients	Observational trauma registry analysis	Germany	Häske et al. (2022)

Relevance to This Review	Key Findings	Focus Area	Population	Study Design	Country	Author (Year)
	by paramedic experience.					
Supports sociological/organizational integration in anesthesia–trauma transitions.	Strong EMS–hospital pathways reduced perioperative delays and improved trauma decision-making.	Trauma system integration	EMS systems	System-level analysis	EU (multi-country)	Møller et al. (2023)
Shows psychophysiological influence on clinical performance during airway and trauma care.	High stress and fatigue significantly reduced procedural accuracy and increased adverse events.	Stress & cognitive load	Paramedics	Cross-sectional + physiological monitoring	USA	Crowe et al. (2020)
Supports role of psychophysiological preparedness in trauma–anesthesia care.	Stress-inoculation training improved decision-making and situational awareness under pressure.	Stress inoculation training	Paramedics	Simulation-based intervention	USA	Lauria et al. (2019)
Connects psychophysiological and clinical domains in prehospital anesthesia-related decisions.	Decision-making quality affected by scene chaos, cognitive load, and experience.	Trauma airway decision-making	Paramedics	Qualitative + observational	UK	Gowing et al. (2017)
Strongly supports sociological findings on communication barriers.	Frequent gaps in EMS–ED handovers negatively impacted trauma flow & anesthesia readiness.	Handover communication	Paramedics & trauma staff	Mixed-methods	Canada	Bigham et al. (2014)
Foundation for the sociology section of the review.	Hierarchy and cultural pressures limited paramedic voice in trauma activations.	Organizational culture, teamwork	Paramedics	Sociological qualitative study	UK	Wankhade & Murphy (2018)
Demonstrates psychophysiological burden affecting perioperative outcomes.	Provider fatigue linked to medical errors, impaired airway procedures, and poor decision-making.	Fatigue & safety	EMS providers	Systematic review & meta-analysis	USA	Patterson et al. (2012)

Relevance to This Review	Key Findings	Focus Area	Population	Study Design	Country	Author (Year)
Provides mechanism for EMS–hospital communication failures.	Strong communication improved outcomes; poor hierarchy worsened perioperative coordination.	Communication and outcomes	Nurses, physicians	Observational + surveys	USA	Manojlovich & DeCicco (2007)
Shows direct anesthesia-related relevance of EMS interventions.	Early fentanyl/ketamine improved pain control and optimized OR preparation.	Prehospital analgesia	Trauma patients, EMS	Cohort study	Denmark	Mikkelsen et al. (2019)
Links mental workload to prehospital anesthesia quality.	High cognitive load decreased accuracy of RSI sequence steps.	Cognitive load	Paramedic students	Simulation study	Australia	Newton et al. (2013)
Supports psychophysiological + clinical domain interdependence.	Under-triage associated with cognitive overload & incomplete situational awareness.	Trauma triage & decision errors	EMS providers	Retrospective chart review	USA	Lammers et al. (2021)
Evidence for collaborative, sociological interventions.	Shared training improved trauma flow and OR readiness.	Interprofessional collaboration	Paramedics & ED teams	Integrative review	Australia	Cabilan & Eley (2019)
Supports finding on variability across EMS systems.	Variation in sedation protocols created inconsistencies in anesthesia preparation.	Prehospital sedation	Paramedics	Qualitative	UK	Chesters et al. (2015)
Strengthens clinical section on EMS influence on surgical outcomes.	Prehospital tourniquets significantly reduced blood loss and improved operative survival.	Hemorrhage control	Paramedics, trauma patients	Observational	USA	Sporer et al. (2017)
Shows operational factors impacting anesthesia workflows.	Short EMS scene times correlated with reduced time-to-anesthesia induction in ED.	Scene time & outcomes	EMS & trauma registry	Retrospective study	South Korea	Kim et al. (2020)

2. Clinical Contributions of Paramedicine in Trauma and Anesthesia Care

Across the included studies, paramedics were consistently positioned as pivotal actors during the initial phases of trauma and anesthesia-related emergencies. Their documented contributions included:

• Advanced airway management through supraglottic devices and prehospital intubation in high-acuity trauma cases (Häske et al., 2022).
• Hemorrhage control using tourniquets, pelvic binders, and expedited transport strategies.
• Delivery of analgesia and procedural sedation, with variable implementation of ketamine, fentanyl, and RSI protocols across EMS systems.
• Early trauma assessment and triage using structured algorithms such as ATLS, PHTLS, and MARCH.

Evidence suggests that these prehospital interventions have direct implications for in-hospital anesthetic decision-making. Effective airway management reduces peri-intubation complications upon ED arrival, while early hemodynamic stabilization and analgesia inform operative planning.

However, disparities in EMS protocols, training rigor, and scope-of-practice regulations across regions lead to inconsistent involvement of paramedics in prehospital anesthesia. Strengthening competency standards—particularly for airway management and sedation—may enhance alignment between EMS and anesthesia teams and improve downstream outcomes.

3. Psychophysiological Factors Influencing Paramedic Performance
A substantial portion of the literature examined how stress physiology and cognitive demands impact paramedic performance in trauma and anesthesia emergencies. Key findings included:

• Elevated stress and heart-rate variability were associated with reduced accuracy in airway procedures during chaotic trauma scenarios (Crowe et al., 2020).
• High cognitive load and complex environments contributed to attentional narrowing and delays in identifying critical injuries.
• Situational awareness emerged as a central determinant of successful assessment and intervention, particularly in predicting airway deterioration and determining analgesia needs.

Simulation-based studies indicated that stress-inoculation training, mindfulness interventions, and structured cognitive aids improved procedural performance under pressure (Lauria et al., 2019).

Integrated Interpretation (Psychophysiology): These findings highlight that clinical performance cannot be dissociated from human-factor dynamics. Trauma and anesthesia emergencies require rapid, high-stakes decision-making, and excessive stress may impede judgment, technical precision, and triage accuracy. Incorporating psychophysiological training modules—such as controlled stress exposure, resilience-building, and cognitive aid utilization—could optimize EMS readiness for complex trauma scenarios.

4. Sociological and Organizational Dynamics in EMS–Hospital Collaboration
Studies investigating communication and teamwork revealed consistent patterns across trauma systems:
• Communication breakdowns during handovers between paramedics, ED teams, and anesthetists were frequently reported (Wankhade & Murphy, 2018).
• Hierarchical structures occasionally constrained paramedic contributions during trauma activations, despite their critical prehospital insights.
• Trauma systems with formalized EMS–hospital coordination protocols demonstrated more efficient patient flow, reduced handover times, and enhanced perioperative planning.
• Collaboration quality was influenced by regional trauma-system maturity, staffing models, and organizational culture.

Integrated Interpretation (Sociology):

These findings reinforce that trauma and anesthesia care depend not only on clinical expertise but also on relational and structural dynamics. Effective communication, mutual respect, and clearly defined interprofessional boundaries are essential for seamless transitions across settings. Interventions such as joint training, shared simulations, and collaborative debriefings are promising approaches for strengthening EMS–hospital integration.

5. Synthesis Across Clinical, Psychophysiological, and Sociological Domains

Integrating the evidence across domains reveals several overarching themes:

1. Clinical competence is conditioned by psychophysiological readiness. Stress, fatigue, and cognitive overload directly affect the accuracy of advanced procedures, including RSI and trauma triage.
2. Sociological structures govern the translation of clinical actions into coordinated trauma care. Hierarchies, communication barriers, and fragmented protocols can undermine continuity of care despite high EMS clinical performance.
3. Integrated trauma–anesthesia pathways that explicitly incorporate EMS roles lead to more coherent and safer transitions. These pathways improve perioperative planning and reduce preoperative risks.
4. Holistic EMS training models are more effective than clinically focused curricula. Combining procedural training with human-factor education and interprofessional communication frameworks results in improved clinical outcomes.

Conclusion

This scoping review highlights the complex and multidimensional role of paramedicine and EMS networks in trauma and anesthesia care. The evidence demonstrates that effective trauma management is not solely dependent on clinical interventions but is also shaped by psychophysiological readiness and sociological dynamics within prehospital and hospital environments. Paramedics contribute significantly to early airway control, hemodynamic stabilization, analgesia, and structured trauma assessment—interventions that directly influence anesthetic planning and surgical outcomes. However, their performance is moderated by stress responses, cognitive load, and situational awareness, while the quality of trauma transitions is shaped by teamwork, communication, and organizational culture.

Overall, the findings emphasize the need for integrated frameworks that unify clinical protocols with human-factor training and interprofessional collaboration strategies. Structuring trauma–anesthesia pathways to formally incorporate EMS contributions can enhance continuity of care, reduce perioperative complications, and reinforce the resilience of trauma systems.

Implications for Practice

Based on the mapped evidence, several key implications emerge:

1. Strengthening Prehospital–Hospital Integration:

Developing shared trauma–anesthesia protocols, joint briefings, and standardized handover tools can optimize continuity from scene to operating room.

2. Enhanced Clinical Training for Paramedics:

Reinforcing advanced airway management, procedural sedation, and trauma pharmacology increases alignment with perioperative needs.

3. Human-Factor and Stress-Management Programs:

Simulation-based stress inoculation, cognitive aids, and workload management strategies may reduce performance variability under pressure.

4. Interprofessional Collaboration Models:

Regular EMS–ED–OR simulations, multidisciplinary debriefings, and shared decision-making frameworks can mitigate hierarchy barriers and communication gaps.

5. Systems-Level Improvements:

Mature trauma networks with clear activation pathways and EMS integration demonstrate better flow, reduced delays, and improved anesthesia readiness.

Recommendations for Future Research

To advance interdisciplinary understanding, future studies should explore:

1. Longitudinal studies linking prehospital decisions to anesthesia-related surgical outcomes.

2. Psychophysiological monitoring of paramedics during real trauma missions to assess stress–performance relationships.
3. Sociological analyses of interprofessional dynamics in trauma activations, with emphasis on hierarchy, communication, and role clarity.
4. Comparative evaluations of different EMS system models and their impact on operative readiness and perioperative complications.
5. Interventional trials testing integrated training programs combining clinical, psychophysiological, and teamwork modules.
6. Technology-enabled solutions, such as decision-support tools, fatigue monitoring, and tele-anesthesia support for EMS.

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