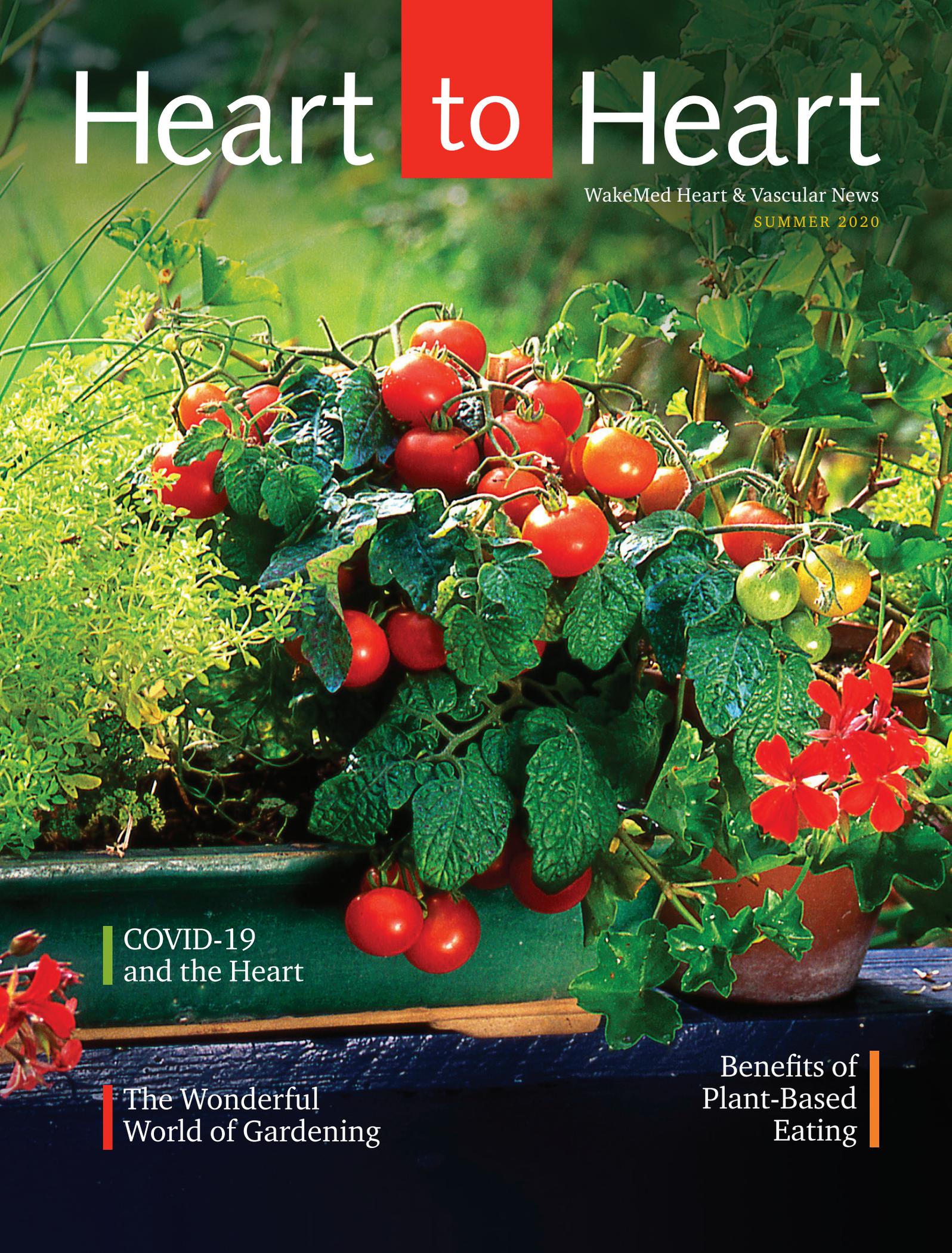


# Heart to Heart

WakeMed Heart & Vascular News

SUMMER 2020



COVID-19  
and the Heart

The Wonderful  
World of Gardening

Benefits of  
Plant-Based  
Eating

# TAKE with...

**JUDSON WILLIAMS, MD**  
Executive Medical Director,  
Heart & Vascular Services



**Q: Who inspires you?**

I am inspired by people who take pride in their work. At WakeMed, I encounter these people every day and in every part of our organization.

**Q: What has been your proudest accomplishment to date?**

Being a good dad. But...we better check with my wife, Margaret on that!

**ALWAYS  
SAFE.**

**FOREVER  
HERE.**

Dr. Judson Williams joined WakeMed in 2016 and is the physician leader for WakeMed's Heart & Vascular physician practices – leading the team through growth, innovation and a relentless focus on patient care. He shares his perspectives on initiatives underway and some personal insight into his background and family life.

**Q: Tell us about your journey into medicine and why you chose to practice at WakeMed.**

Mainly it was my mom who wanted me to go into medicine and thought this would be a good path for me – and I'm thankful for this. There weren't any physicians in our family and when she dropped me off at age 18 to attend Princeton University, she literally dropped me off at the pre-med planning meeting. After Princeton, I attended Vanderbilt Medical School before spending a decade at Duke Hospital completing my internship, general surgery residency, clinical research fellowship, and ultimately cardiothoracic fellowship. Certainly, I have been moved and inspired by many along the way. Ultimately, I came to WakeMed because I believed in the mission of having the country's best medical care here, in Raleigh, which is my hometown. Having the chance to directly impact my community is something I cherish very much.

**Q: How has COVID-19 impacted life at your house?**

My wife Margaret and I have four children, so it's certainly not quiet in quarantine for us! We have tried to focus on some of the good things that this challenge has brought including time together, slowing down a bit, being outdoors, keeping things simple, and renewed appreciation for many of the small things. We talk a lot in our house about the love and respect we have for our Wake County school teachers, the brave nurses, respiratory therapists, technicians and others treating this virus, and the countless many who have come together to help in any way they can.

**Q: What exciting things are underway for WakeMed Heart & Vascular in the next 12 months?**

I could talk about this all day! In the next year, we will expand offerings in preventive heart care, cardiovascular imaging, arrhythmia, heart failure, stroke prevention, venous disease, and much more. These efforts really span the health system and touch all locations. We can expect continued expansion of our cardiac critical care services with leading collaborative approaches and new technologies for our sickest patients. I am particularly excited about our COVID-19-safe cardiac rehabilitation growing as our phenomenal rehab therapists and programs are frequently recognized as best-in-state. Telehealth has expanded tremendously, and stay tuned for the introduction of wearable technologies and home monitoring in the coming months. We will also leverage new advanced data analytics to accelerate quality for our heart and vascular patients. And, we will continue to innovate with clinical trials in atrial fibrillation, stent technology, chest pain diagnostics, kidney protection, coronary and surgical robotics, and more. The synergy we have across patient care from the complex to the routine is exciting – we're all working together and focused on providing the very best care.

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In this unprecedented time of the COVID-19 pandemic, we understand your concern for the safety of yourself, your loved ones and our health care workers. WakeMed is taking extra precautions to keep you and our team safe by:

**Leading by Example.** Our employees follow the latest, best practices as directed by federal, state and local health agencies.

**Visitation.** To limit exposure to and the spread of COVID-19, visitation in many areas is limited. Ask your provider for details or check our web site before visiting or inviting a visitor.

**Screening.** We're screening all staff, patients and visitors for symptoms of COVID-19 upon entry to any WakeMed location.

**Wearing Masks.** All staff, patients and visitors are required to wear a mask while in any WakeMed facility. (If needed, we will provide one.)

**Social Distancing.** Waiting rooms have been rearranged and floor signs indicate where to stand to provide proper spacing. When possible, sick and well patients are separated.

**Clean Facilities.** Enhanced protocols for cleaning and sanitizing are in place for your safety.

**Safe Schedules.** Schedules have been modified to allow for social distancing and more time for cleaning. Virtual visits are available to keep you safe at home, and no-touch options like e-check-in for appointments are available.

**Learn more at [wakemed.org/always-safe-forever-here](http://wakemed.org/always-safe-forever-here)**

# COVID-19 and the Heart



COVID-19 brings so many questions for all of us, but for patients with heart disease – those questions often come with greater worry from people who are already managing health problems and risk factors. We've consulted several experts from our WakeMed Heart & Vascular team to answer many of your common concerns about COVID-19 and heart health.

## How is COVID-19 impacting patients with heart problems?

Unfortunately, early evidence has shown that people with cardiovascular conditions and/or risk factors such as heart disease, cardiac arrhythmia, high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol and/or diabetes are at higher risk of complications related to COVID-19. In addition, patients without heart conditions may develop them due to the virus. That's why it's very important for everyone to watch for cardiac symptoms. Keep an eye out for chest pain, shortness of breath, increased swelling, weight gain, dizziness/lightheadedness or palpitations.



JASON HAAG, MD  
WakeMed Heart  
& Vascular



JOHN SINDEN, MD  
WakeMed Heart  
& Vascular

## Is it safe to see my cardiologist right now?

Regardless of what's going on around us, we know that heart disease and other cardiac problems are chronic conditions that need to be monitored carefully. We understand our patients are at greater risk of complications, so whether you prefer a virtual or an in-person visit, we've done everything we can to make your appointment as safe and efficient as possible. From symptom screening/temperature checks for patients and staff to wearing masks, offering electronic check-in, the ability to wait in your car rather than the lobby, modifying our facility's layouts to, as always, deeply disinfecting all surfaces throughout the day – your safety and the safety of our staff are the top priorities.

**SIGN UP TODAY!**

MyChart is a great way to keep up with your health and offers many great new features! You can send messages to your cardiologist or any other WakeMed provider, keep up with your medications and appointments – and even use it to check-in and fill out paperwork prior to your appointment, wait in your car to avoid the lobby, or to conduct a virtual visit.



To establish a MyChart account, please ask for assistance when calling to schedule your appointment. The WakeMed Heart & Vascular office staff can help you get access to a new account and will walk you through the steps to get set up.



## Don't Delay Care in an Emergency!

Recent studies show that people suffering from heart attack or stroke have ignored critical symptoms or delayed emergency care due to fears of going to the hospital during the COVID-19 pandemic. In late April, the American Heart Association, American College of Cardiology, American College of Emergency Physicians and several other professional associations came together to urge consumers NOT to delay seeking emergency care – especially if the following symptoms are present:

### Warning Signs of a Heart Attack

- Chest discomfort;
- Discomfort in other areas of the body such as your arms, back, neck, jaw or stomach;
- Shortness of breath;
- Breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness

### Warning Signs of a Stroke

- Face drooping;
- Arm weakness
- Speech slurring, or other cognitive difficulty

“Cardiovascular events don’t stop during a pandemic – which is why we’re here for our patients, 24/7 through our six adult emergency departments,” explains cardiologist Dr. John Sinden. “When it comes to these symptoms, we know that calling 9-1-1 offers the best chance of surviving or saving a life. Just like we’ve done throughout the hospital and physician offices, our emergency departments have put many precautions in place to ensure patients get the care they need in the safest environment possible.”

## I have heart failure – what do I need to know about COVID-19?

PLEASE continue to take your medications as prescribed, watch your diet and sodium intake, and maintain your routine care. Early on, there was talk that certain heart failure drugs (ACE inhibitors and ARBs) might increase your risk of contracting COVID-19, but there is absolutely NO data to support this. Secondly, there hasn’t been much data published about patients with existing heart failure and how they are faring with COVID-19, but there have been numerous reports of people developing heart failure as a result of COVID-19. What we do know is that keeping a close watch on your condition is always in your best interest. To do this, we are offering virtual visits or in-person visits, and we are now using new technologies (Implantable Cardiac Defibrillators and cardiac fluid sensors) to track how well your heart failure is being managed. The bottom line is, please stay in touch with your doctor – we’ll do everything we can to keep you safe and cared for throughout this pandemic.



STUART RUSSELL, MD  
WakeMed Heart & Vascular



ASHISH PATEL, MD  
WakeMed Heart & Vascular

## I have an arrhythmia – what do I need to know about COVID-19?

There is growing data that there are arrhythmia complications from coronavirus, but we still are not sure of the specific relationships. We do know that any infection can trigger and worsen atrial fibrillation in patients. We have seen COVID-19 cause rhythm problems such as complete heart block (which requires an emergency pacemaker) and the development of life-threatening arrhythmias called ventricular tachycardia.

The good news for current arrhythmia patients is that we have many options that allow us to monitor you from the comfort and safety of home. These include implanted devices such as pacemakers, defibrillators and loop recorder devices that can provide continuous monitoring. Non-implantable devices such as the KardiaMobile device or an Apple Watch can also track your rhythm, and their data can be sent to us for evaluation via WakeMed MyChart.

Finally, we urge you to stay in close contact with your care team, and alert us if you have new or worsening symptoms.



BHAVANI BALARAVI, MD  
WakeMed Heart & Vascular

## How can we stay healthy while social distancing?

Social distancing and gym closures have had an impact on people’s ability to stay active – and may have led to an increase in unhealthy eating habits. Remaining active in this ‘new normal’ is more important than ever since exercise can have a positive effect on the cells and molecules of the immune system. It is paramount that we find creative ways to exercise regularly – even while social distancing. You can get active at home with your family, or virtually through exercise videos and apps. Take this opportunity to get more comfortable with new technologies – or stay active through walking, yardwork or at-home exercises. As it relates to diet, make sure you’re getting a well-balanced diet of fresh fruit, vegetables, and limit processed foods that are likely to be high in sodium, sugar and fat. Set activity goals and challenge yourself to meet them.

## How can I look out for my mental health during COVID-19?

Anxiety and isolation are common concerns for everyone during COVID-19, but for heart patients, these problems can lead to undue stress that could have a negative impact on your heart health. Try to stay connected to your friends and family – whether it’s through regular phone calls, Zoom meetings or social distancing visits. If you find yourself getting anxious about all that’s happening around us, talk to someone about your concerns, and try to limit your exposure to the news media – which can heighten feelings of worry.



RAJ FOFARIA, MD  
WakeMed Heart & Vascular



## Free Fitness Apps Worth Trying

- 1 Map My Walk** – Walking is a great workout at any age! This app allows you to log your walks, save routes and even helps motivate you to improve your workouts. Aside from walking, it allows you to track up to 600 other types of physical activities.
- 2 Yoga Studio** – Includes a library of 100+ yoga videos and meditations, lasting from 5 to 60 minutes for all levels. Yoga can help build balance, strength and bone health and is easy to do at home.
- 3 Johnson & Johnson Official 7-Minute Workout** – Features more than 20 easy-to-follow workout routines you can do from the comfort and safety of home. Who doesn’t have seven minutes for good heart health?
- 4 SilverSneakers GO** – If you’re a SilverSneakers member, this app offers on-demand video workouts, fitness tracking and, during non-COVID-19 times, it can help you find open workout facilities and SilverSneakers classes.

If you’re not AppStore savvy, you can always visit YouTube and simply search for ‘exercises for seniors’ or ‘beginner exercise videos’ and you may find some great options!

## Creative Ways to Stay Connected

Human connection is so important. Staying connected to friends and family can help reduce feelings of sadness and loneliness that are common during isolation. Here are some ideas to help you keep in touch – from a distance.

- **Get Facetime.** Whether you use FaceTime, Zoom or Google Hangouts, getting to see your loved ones’ smiling faces is sure to boost your spirits. If you can’t connect in real-time, Marco Polo is a great app that allows you to send “video postcards” to one another.
- **Reach Out.** Send emails, texts and even letters or postcards each day to those you love – doing so will help you feel connected even when you are physically distanced.
- **Be a Good Neighbor.** Check in with your neighbors regularly and ask them to do the same. Just knowing someone nearby is looking out for you can be very comforting.
- **Play On.** There are many mobile games you can play with friends and family remotely – examples that are fun and easy to learn include Words With Friends 2 (similar to Scrabble); Fairway Solitaire; Uno and Monopoly.

## Telehealth, Explained: The Doctor Will See You Now... Virtually.

Most of us grew up building a face-to-face relationship with our doctors, and something about that close, personal connection is comforting – particularly when discussing important topics like our long-term health and wellness. Fortunately, advancements in technology have allowed doctors to provide similar “face-to-face” care remotely.

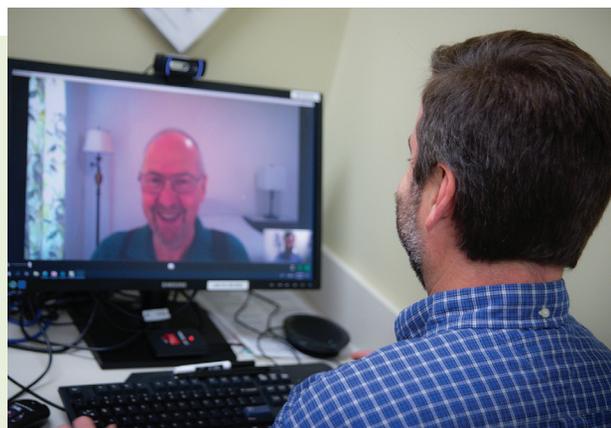
Telehealth, the practice of using video/telephone interaction for the delivery of healthcare, has been around for decades in some form or fashion. Like most new technologies, though, adoption over the past several years has been slower than many experts had expected. Some preferred the comfort of in-person interaction, others feared the technology, while many healthcare providers didn’t offer the service. Until now, that is.

COVID-19, social distancing and shelter-in-place orders have accelerated the use of telehealth and WakeMed has responded quickly. When COVID-19 began ramping up earlier this spring, WakeMed moved full-speed ahead into the world of providing virtual visits to ensure our patients could get the important care they needed from the comfort and safety of home.

Virtual visits are now available at WakeMed for all specialties – ranging from heart and vascular to primary and urgent care, ENT, OB/GYN and everything in between.

### TIP

While most insurance companies are covering the cost of virtual visits now due to the pandemic, those policies are subject to change. Check with your insurance provider or our physician office staff to be sure virtual visits are covered.



## What Our Patients Are Saying

We’ve heard lots of positive feedback from many patients on virtual visits. Preparing for and getting through the first visit from a technology perspective will take a little extra energy, but then it’s smooth sailing from there.

WakeMed Heart & Vascular patient Leonard Pierce and his wife, Olivia, are very thankful for the virtual visit they had during the COVID-19 pandemic. Leonard explains, *“I wasn’t feeling well – I was having some pain near my chest, but we live over an hour away from WakeMed and my cardiologist, Dr. Frances Wood’s office. When I called and they recommended a video visit – we weren’t too sure since we aren’t very on-the-ball with technology, but we got it worked out quickly. Within a few minutes of looking at me, Dr. Wood knew I needed to be seen by a doctor immediately. While the condition I ended up having wasn’t heart-related, I had a severe infection that needed prompt attention. Thanks to our virtual visit, we knew what to do and I got the treatment I needed quickly.”*

## A How-To for Virtual Visits

Since introducing virtual visits in March, WakeMed’s physicians and staff have conducted thousands of appointments per week to keep patients healthy and connected with their providers. If you’re still intimidated by virtual visits, here are the simple steps needed to schedule and complete a virtual visit.



### Schedule Your Appointment.

No special technology needed! You can call any of our offices to schedule the traditional way and we’ll provide you all the information you need to prepare for your virtual visit.



### Get Your Technology Ready.

Some patients prefer a simple telephone visit – that’s perfectly fine although we prefer to see your smiling face. For those who choose video visit, our office staff will provide you with detailed instructions on how to download MyChart and/or Webex, which are the two tools we use to conduct virtual visits.



### Bring Your Questions and Support Person.

The great thing about a video visit is you can “bring” your medications, a list of questions and anyone you’d like. Spouses, children, caregivers – and even pets make regular appearances on our virtual visits. We are happy to welcome your extended support team!

## Help for High-Risk Heart Patients



"...our CHIP program is such an important way to help the thousands of patients who are living with chronic shortness of breath and/or chest pain improve their quality of life and reduce their risk of heart attack."



**DR. SAROJ NEUPANE**  
WakeMed Heart  
& Vascular

Many cardiovascular patients living with heart artery blockages (known as coronary artery disease) who are considered a high-risk for treatment have previously been left with little hope for better outcome or symptom resolution. These patients suffer from chronic shortness of breath, chest pain or decreased exercise tolerance because of the blockages and are often told they aren't a good candidate for surgery or other intervention. In most cases, patients are deemed "high-risk" due to advanced age, underlying health conditions or anatomic reasons that could make a procedure such as angioplasty and stent placement difficult.

Fortunately, WakeMed recently launched a new program designed just for these patients, based on emerging treatment options and advanced training programs. Known as the Complex Higher-Risk & Indicated Patients (CHIP) Program, WakeMed Heart & Vascular now has the expertise to offer complete percutaneous revascularization (a medical term for restoring blood flow to the arteries using balloon and stents) for high-risk patients. This is done minimally-invasively using catheters rather than a surgical procedure like open heart surgery.

WakeMed's growing Heart & Vascular CHIP program is pleased to offer this advanced treatment option for patients living with chronic symptoms of coronary artery disease. Fellowship-trained in CHIP, interventional cardiologist Dr. Saroj Neupane explains this new approach to care.

"Advances in techniques and technology have made it possible for us to do more to help these patients than we could just five or ten years ago. With patients living longer and the prevalence of cardiovascular disease increasing, our CHIP program is such an important way to help the thousands of patients who are living with heart blockages improve their quality of life and reduce their risk of heart attack. This program aims to offer new and innovative treatment for those patients who have been told they have no procedural options."

"Dr. Neupane has been a great addition to our team," explains interventional cardiologist Dr. Frances Wood. "He is the only interventionalist in North Carolina and surrounding states with special fellowship training in complex interventions. He has provided a complex stenting option to my sickest patients who had no other option but to accept their chest pain and shortness of breath. My patients and colleagues are grateful to have him as part of our WakeMed team."

If you would like to know more about what options may be available for you through the CHIP program, call 919-235-1999 to schedule an appointment with Dr. Neupane and his CHIP team.



## Cary Hospital Heart & Vascular Program Achieves 100 PCI Milestone

Congratulations to Cary Hospital's Heart & Vascular Labs, for performing 100 percutaneous coronary interventions (PCI) in the cardiac catheterization lab since cardiac interventions began on April 1, 2019. A percutaneous coronary intervention is a treatment that follows a diagnostic catheterization – it's the procedure that treats a blockage in the artery using tools such as angioplasty and stent placement. Cary Hospital's 100th PCI was performed by PM Shah, MD, with Cary Cardiology. Kudos to all the exceptional interventional cardiologists and staff who helped achieve this important milestone.

## Cary Hospital Introduces New Equipment & Procedure for Emergent Stroke Cases

WakeMed Cary Hospital launched a new neuro thrombectomy program for stroke patients requiring mechanical thrombectomy. Using state-of-the-art biplane imaging equipment, the experts from Raleigh Neurosurgical Clinic and Raleigh Radiology can now perform life-saving procedures to remove a blood clot from a vein or artery at Cary Hospital. These experts are supported by the excellent team of cardiovascular specialists in the Heart & Vascular Lab and Cary Hospital's compassionate nursing staff. WakeMed Cary Hospital is now able to provide a higher level of stroke care than ever before, eliminating the need for transferring patients to other facilities. The first case was successfully performed in June.

"We are thrilled to expand our brain and spine health offerings here at Cary Hospital as part of our ongoing commitment to ensuring patients in southwestern Wake County can receive the advanced care they need, close to home," explains Tom Gough, senior vice president & administrator, Community Hospitals.



In February, the neuro thrombectomy implementation team at Cary Hospital gathers together after months of hard work, training and preparation.



The WakeMed ECMO team debriefs after the first VV ECMO case was performed in April.

## VV ECMO Helps Save Lives

WakeMed successfully treated its first adult patient with veno-venous (VV) ECMO on Thursday, April 16. This advanced life support technique is used in critically-ill patients whose lungs are not working properly due to severe, refractory respiratory failure. As a temporary replacement for the lungs, VV ECMO can both remove carbon dioxide and provide oxygen to the blood.

"A successful ECMO case is made possible by the months of specialized training and coordinated teamwork from many areas within WakeMed," said **David Kirk, MD**, executive medical director (Critical Care).

"I am humbled by the commitment and dedication, organization and attention to detail shown by my colleagues throughout this process," noted **Judson Williams, MD**, director, WakeMed Heart & Vascular. "I was confident that we had the elements in place to achieve this outcome and we are grateful to our colleagues at Duke through *HeartCare Plus+* who helped make this program possible."

# NEW + NOTEWORTHY

## Welcome, Dr. Ketha!



We're pleased to welcome Dr. Siva Ketha, who recently joined the WakeMed Heart & Vascular team. Dr. Ketha is a board-certified interventional cardiologist with clinical interests in interventional therapies for ischemic heart disease including complex coronary interventions, acute and chronic manage-

ment of venous thromboembolic disease and interventional therapies for peripheral arterial diseases. He attended medical school at Gandhi Medical College in Hyderabad, India and earned his master's degree in public health at the University of Florida in Gainesville. Dr. Ketha completed Internal Medicine residency training from the University of Illinois and fellowship training in vascular medicine and cardiovascular diseases from the Mayo Clinic, interventional cardiology from William Beaumont Hospital in Michigan and peripheral vascular interventions from Massachusetts General Hospital. Dr. Ketha believes that the needs of the patient come first. In his free time, he enjoys reading, long distance running, hiking, cooking vegan food and spending time with his family.

*Dr. Ketha is welcoming new cardiology patients at the Six Forks Road office in Raleigh and at the Waverly Place office in Cary.*

## Heart Failure Support Group – We're Still Here For You!

While we're not meeting in person due to COVID-19, we're still here for you! We can be reached Monday - Friday from 8 am to 4 pm at (919) 350-4410, and our team continues to check up on patients who've been recently hospitalized. We are evaluating ways to meet virtually, but we need your feedback on the best day, time and topics. Please be on the lookout for a brief survey via MyChart or in the mail. In the meantime, if you have feedback, please email Eleanor Rawls at [erawls@wakemed.org](mailto:erawls@wakemed.org).



Mended Hearts

## Mended Hearts Update

Mended Hearts of the Triangle is available to support patients during and after a cardiovascular event. While in-person meetings and hospital visits are not being done at this time due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we're working to introduce virtual meetings and hospital visits in the near future. In the meantime, please reach out to learn more about all that Mended Hearts offers at WakeMed.

Hazel Covington, RN  
Mended Hearts Program Coordinator  
(919) 350-6888 or [hcovington@wakemed.org](mailto:hcovington@wakemed.org)



## Stroke & Heart Failure Teams Earn Gold for Quality Care

The staff and physicians who care for stroke and heart failure patients at WakeMed are once again being recognized for exceptional care! Congratulations to our teams for earning national Get With the Guidelines® Quality Awards and Target honors from the American Heart Association.

### Raleigh Campus

- **Stroke:** Gold Plus Quality Award, Target Stroke Honor Roll and Target Type 2 Diabetes Honor Roll
- **Heart Failure:** Gold Plus Quality Award and Target Heart Failure Honor Roll

### Cary Hospital

- **Stroke:** Gold Plus Quality Award and Target Type 2 Diabetes Honor Roll
- **Heart Failure:** Gold Plus Quality Award and Target Heart Failure Honor Roll

Our teams meet or exceed national guidelines for:

- Proper use of medications and other treatments
- Incorporating evidence-based guidelines for stroke and heart failure care
- Reducing the amount of time it takes a stroke patient to move from arrival in the ED to treatment
- Providing education on staying healthy after stroke, managing heart failure and overall health
- Proper medications, treatment, monitoring and education for patients with Type 2 diabetes

*Congratulations and thank you to our teams for working so hard for our stroke and heart failure patients!*



## When Gardening Gets Tough



An avid gardener, Johnny Johnson is a retired power lineman who is no stranger to heart disease. He's been fighting it for more than 20 years – with several stents and a stroke already behind him. Earlier this year, his symptoms were just subtle enough that Johnny thought the way he was feeling was just a normal part of aging.

The garden is where Johnny and his wife of 35 years, Sherrill, spend most of their time – even in the colder months of January and February, which are when his symptoms began. While there's not too much to do in the garden during the winter, they continued to spend time on garden maintenance and basic upkeep. But for Johnny, the work seemed to feel just a bit more difficult than usual.

"After 44 years as a power lineman, I thought my parts were just worn out," he explains. "I didn't feel much different – but now that I look back, I guess things that used to be easy for me that I've been doing forever just started to feel harder."

Fortunately for Johnny, his wife had a keen listening ear. He came back from the mailbox complaining of an unusual tightening in his throat. She noticed he was short of breath, too, and called his cardiologist, Dr. John Kelley, who promptly scheduled Johnny for a stress echo test and further evaluation. His results indicated his aortic valve was in bad shape and he had three major blockages. After consulting with cardiovascular surgeon Dr. Judson Williams, Johnny's surgery was scheduled for two weeks later.

On March 3, 2020, Johnny had an aortic valve replacement and a triple bypass. After a six-night hospital stay, Johnny was discharged feeling great just as COVID-19 came on the scene in North Carolina. With cardiac rehab cancelled due to social distancing guidelines, Johnny took long walks with his wife and spent time outdoors in the garden. He had one in-person follow-up visit after surgery and another to have

"My experience gets a ten out of ten rating! We are so blessed to have such amazing doctors and surgeons – I feel like they just removed my old, tired parts and put new ones in."

JOHNNY JOHNSON

his staples removed – otherwise, he's enjoyed several virtual visits (via telephone) with his doctors to make sure his recovery has gone smoothly.

"I'm very fortunate that between my wonderful wife and my garden, I have everything I need right here at home," Johnny explains.

Johnny recalls decades of memories they've shared in their garden – watching their grandchildren (who are now grown) play in the backyard garden oasis. He credits many of their family's happiest days to the garden, which includes seasonal veggies, flowers, ornamental plants, pollinators, as well as a water garden and pond area they built.

"I remember the grandkids splashing their feet in that pond and the beautiful sound of their giggles when the fish 'kissed' their feet. Gardening has kept us young, active and happy." Today, Johnny and Sherrill are thankful for both their garden and the exceptional care they received throughout their latest heart 'adventure.'

"From my stress test to the day of surgery all the way through my recovery process, I felt so nurtured and reassured by Dr. Williams, Dr. Kelley and the team," he explains. "My experience gets a ten out of ten rating! We are so blessed to have such amazing doctors and surgeons – I feel like they just removed my old, tired parts and put new ones in. I'm feeling great, getting stronger every day and am gradually building up my stamina in the garden."



# The Many Benefits of Plant-Based Eating



Watermelon and tomato salad recipe bottom of page 13.

## The Many Benefits of Plant-Based Eating

Summer is here, and healthy, fresh greens, veggies and fruits are plentiful. If ever there was an ideal time to try a plant-based diet, it's right now.

The benefits of plant-based eating are abundant – particularly when it comes to heart health. According to the *Journal of the American Heart Association*, eating a vegetarian diet may reduce the risk of developing cardiovascular disease by 16 percent and reduce the risk of death by approximately 31 percent.

In addition, research has found that eating a plant-based diet can reduce your risk of high blood pressure, diabetes and many cancers while also lowering your LDL (bad) cholesterol level and helping you maintain a healthy weight. Other studies conducted at Loma Linda University Health suggest plant-based eating could help you live longer, and the extra nutrients you're likely to take in may help your immune system function at its best.

While some worry that eliminating animal products may deprive your body of certain nutrients, experts have proven that plant-based diets offer all the necessary nutrients our bodies need. Many are surprised to learn you can get all the protein, carbohydrates, fat, vitamins and minerals needed from plant sources. In fact, a healthy plant-based diet is often higher in fiber, nutrients and phytochemicals (which help protect against pathogens that cause illness/disease), and are low in saturated fat, calories, and free of cholesterol.

In some circumstances, supplementation of Vitamin B12 may be recommended for those eating a plant-based diet since B12 is mostly found in animal products.



“Being a vegetarian isn’t for everyone, but there are so many benefits to eating a diet that incorporates more plant-based foods,” explains cardiologist Padma Hari, MD. “When talking to my patients about diet, I encourage them to consider moving more toward a plant-based diet. This will vary based on an individual’s needs and desires, but it could mean eliminating animal foods from certain meals each day or week, eating only fish, or going fully vegetarian or vegan. While there’s no ‘right’ answer, incorporating as many natural, plant-based foods as possible is always a healthy choice.”



PADMA HARI, MD  
WakeMed Heart & Vascular

## What is Plant-Based Eating?

Plant-based eating emphasizes consuming foods from plants, while reducing your intake of all animal-food sources. A healthy plant-based diet is one that adheres to the following guidelines:

- Eat plenty of heart-healthy, plant-based foods including whole grains, vegetables, fruits, beans, legumes, nuts, and healthy oils like olive oil and avocado oil.
- Reduce amounts of less healthy plant-based foods such as refined grains and cereals, sugar-sweetened beverages, sugar-sweetened desserts, and processed plant-based foods.
- Limit or avoid animal foods, including:
  - poultry, fish, beef, and pork
  - dairy; milk, yogurt, cheese, ice cream, and cream
  - foods that contain animal products such as fats or lards

## Plant-Based Eating - Tips for Getting Started

Courtesy of WakeMed Registered Dietitian Monika Kraus

If starting on a plant-based eating plan seems overwhelming, it's okay to take small steps. The goal is to choose an eating plan that works best for your health and lifestyle needs. Here are some ways to get started.

- 1 Fill half of your plate with vegetables at lunch and dinner. Use prep methods like grilling, roasting or stir frying your vegetables. Have a salad with your meal or as your meal. Try to eat a variety of vegetables, focusing on an array of colors. Snack on vegetables between meals by having hummus, guacamole, or salsa (all are plant-based dips!).
- 2 Have a smaller portion of meat at your meal and mix in some beans to reach your protein goal.
- 3 Choose healthy fats when preparing meals including olive oil, avocado oil, nuts, nut butter and avocados.
- 4 Choose at least one night a week that is designated as a “vegetarian” dinner night. How about a Meatless Monday?
- 5 Choose whole grains including oatmeal, whole-wheat bread, quinoa and barley.
- 6 Add a variety of fresh fruit daily. Besides eating fresh fruit, frozen, grilled or baked make for a sweet treat. Or try making a smoothie.
- 7 Include greens in your diet such as spinach, kale and collards.
- 8 Use fresh and dried herbs to flavor your food.

## Not All Plant-Based Diets Are Created Equal

When it comes to heart health, plant-based eating isn't just about giving up meat. It's about adding healthful foods and limiting processed foods – while reducing intake of animal products. In fact, a study in the July 2017 issue of the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* revealed that those who ate a plant-based diet high in refined grains (such as pasta, white rice, processed breads and cereals), sugar- sweetened beverages and desserts, and processed plant-based foods actually had a higher risk of heart disease than those who ate a healthy, balanced diet that included limited amounts of meat and animal foods.

### Fresh Watermelon & Tomato Salad | Serves 6-8

#### SALAD

- 1 qt. fresh tomatoes, diced in large cubes
- 1 small seedless watermelon, diced in large cubes
- 2 avocados, large diced
- ¼ c. toasted pistachios
- 2 oz. mint leaves, sliced thinly
- ½ red onion, sliced thinly (optional)

**Nutritional Information Per Serving:** Calories: 90; Total fat: 4 g (0.3 saturated fat); Cholesterol: 0 mg; Sodium: 245 mg; Carbohydrates: 14.2 g; Fiber: 1.4 g; Sugars: 11.1 g; Protein: 1.5 g

#### DRESSING

- ½ c. extra virgin olive oil
- ½ c. sherry vinegar
- Season to taste



### Roasted Red Pepper Hummus Wrap | Serves 1

#### WRAP

- 1 10-inch flavored wrap or tortilla
- ⅓ c. roasted red pepper hummus
- ½ cucumber, sliced
- ¾ c. fresh spinach leaves
- 1 sliced tomato
- ¼ c. avocado, sliced
- Alfalfa sprouts + basil leaves

#### RED PEPPER HUMMUS

- 15.5 oz. canned, no-salt-added, or low-sodium white cannellini beans
- ½ c. roasted red peppers
- 1 Tbsp. lemon juice
- 3 Tbsp. water
- ¼ tsp. ground, sweet paprika
- ¼ tsp. ground black pepper

#### INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Make hummus by first draining and rinsing beans. Place into the bowl of a food processor, along with remaining hummus ingredients. Puree until mixture is smooth – about 1 minute. Keep 1/3 cup for this recipe and save the remaining hummus for snacks.
- 2 Spread hummus in the center of the wrap, leaving about a half-inch border around the edges. Layer vegetables, basil and spouts on wrap, roll and slice at an angle.

#### Nutritional Information Per Serving:

Calories: 356; Total fat: 14.7 g (2.5 saturated fat); Cholesterol: 0 mg; Sodium: 328 mg; Carbohydrates: 50.5 g; Fiber: 8.8 g; Sugars: 6.4 g; Protein: 10.3 g

# The Wonderful World of Gardening



From beautiful flowers and fresh produce to the numerous mental and physical benefits it provides – there’s no arguing that gardening is good for you. If you’ve never tried your hand at gardening, the great news it’s never too late to start. From the very young to the very old, gardening is a hobby that can be enjoyed at any age. Plus – we’re all spending a little more time at home these days – making gardening a great way to get active, enjoy nature and reap some great (and healthy!) benefits while safely social distancing.



TOM DEVITO, PA-C  
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“Gardening is a great way to stay physically active for heart patients of any age as it requires bending, stretching and moving on a regular basis,” explains Physician Assistant Tom DeVito, PA-C. “Caring for life outside yourself is also mentally and spiritually rewarding. Plus, it gives you a

reason to become more active, doing something you enjoy – which is great for your mind, body and spirit.”

If you fall too far down the rabbit hole of gardening research, it can feel a bit overwhelming. Dr. Jeana Myers with the North Carolina Cooperative Extension – Wake County explains that there are three primary types of gardening. These include: in-ground, raised bed and container gardening. Because of its versatility, simplicity

and accessibility to everyone regardless of where you live, container gardening is popular and convenient. Dr. Myers says it’s perfect for those who don’t have much land and for those who have a hard time bending down since you can put containers on tables for easy watering and maintenance.

## Starting a Container Garden

Dr. Myers explains a few easy steps to get started.

- 1 Choose Your Plants:** Decide first whether you want to grow flowers, ornamental plants, herbs or vegetables. Important considerations before picking your plant(s) include: space you have available, amount of sunlight for that space and maintenance required for your garden type. Remember that plants are just like people – some require very little attention while others need all the TLC you can give them, so choose wisely. Finally, be sure that all plants in the same container have similar requirements for water, light and nutrients.
- 2 Select Your Container(s):** Choosing the correct pot can have a big impact on the health of your plants. Dr. Myers suggests plastic pots for container gardening since clay ones can dry out more quickly. She also recommends checking your plants’ rooting depth and estimated height before picking a pot to ensure plants will have ample room for growth so they can flourish over time. Finally, all containers need good drainage, so be sure there are plenty of holes in the bottom. In some ornamental pots, you may need to drill them in to ensure roots don’t drown in standing water.

## TIPS

Pay attention to your soil. Some potting mixes have moisture control crystals in them that aren’t suitable or safe for vegetable crops. If you’re planting anything edible, be sure to get a potting mix that’s intended for vegetables.



## Get Moving With a Fall Vegetable Garden

The time for planting a fall garden is getting close! Most NC experts believe early August is the best time to get started. Because the weather is fairly mild in North Carolina, even some plants traditionally thought of as “summer” plants will thrive during much of the fall. Some suggested plants to start in the fall include:

- **Vegetables** such as lettuce, spinach, kale, cabbage, broccoli, arugula, garlic, radishes, swiss chard and/or carrots.
- **Flowers** including marigold, petunias, vinca, begonia, veronica, salvia or cosmos will bloom through the fall. If you want colorful plants to last through the winter, try ornamental cabbage or pansies. It’s also a great time to plant spring bulbs in pots that you can nurse through the winter and move outdoors in the spring.
- **Herbs** like rosemary, oregano, thyme or parsley will do well throughout the fall and winter in most of North Carolina.



- 3 Find the Perfect Spot:** Some plants like sun, others like shade, and some need a combination. Be sure to place your containers in the best location for your plants’ needs – and move them around as needed if they require extra sun or a break from direct light.
- 4 Get Planting:** “Using the right soil with container gardening is critical,” explains Dr. Myers. She stresses that potting mix should always be used since it allows for better drainage, which will ensure the roots can breathe. Because potting mix is sterile, it’s also free of fungus which will help control disease and prevent insects. While it’s more expensive than regular gardening soil, potting mix can be used for several years and really is a must-have for container gardening.

Be vigilant about watering or try drip irrigation. This is particularly useful if you have a lot of pots – or if you go out of town regularly. To set it up, purchase drip tape from your local garden or home improvement store and add emitters as needed – you can find ones that drip or spray a fine mist over the plants to keep them watered without much effort. A timer can make it all automatic!

In general, use plants rather than seeds for container gardening if you want quicker growth before cold weather.



## Gardening for Heart Health

Dozens of scientific studies have confirmed that gardening can have many positive effects on the body and mind. Here are just a few of the potential benefits:

**Better Mental Health.** Stress is a significant risk factor for heart disease. Fortunately, a comprehensive meta-analysis of numerous studies on the effects of gardening in human health showed it can help reduce feelings of anxiety and depression. Another study published earlier this summer in *Landscape and Urban Planning* showed that household gardening promoted higher average levels of happiness, meaningfulness and positive emotions – particularly in those who participated in vegetable gardening. Finally, the sense of accomplishment you get from growing your own garden can contribute to improved confidence and self-esteem.

**Movement Matters.** From planting and pruning to weeding and watering, gardening keeps you moving. The American Heart Association recommends 150 minutes of physical activity per week – and gardening is a great way to get some of this exercise while not technically “exercising.” A 2019 study published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* concluded that even low levels of ‘leisure time physical activity’ such as gardening or walking can lower the risk of death from cardiovascular disease or other causes. If you tire of the treadmill, take it to the garden!

**Healthy Diet, Healthy Heart.** Experts recommend filling half of your plate with fruits and vegetables at every meal, and the USDA MyPlate campaign suggests that adults need 2.5 cups of veggies each day. Growing your own food can make it easier and more affordable to achieve these daily recommendations. Whether you grow leafy greens, tomatoes, squash, cucumbers or beans – your heart will appreciate the health benefits straight from your garden.

Heart health aside, gardening can also help your body get more Vitamin D and enjoy better bone health, too. To summarize it all – you don’t have to be an expert to reap the many benefits of gardening. Just get planting!

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