“Be Kind. Everyone You Meet is Fighting a Hard Battle.”

The VA, and the Minneapolis VA Health Care System, have turned a corner in restoring Veteran’s trust. In Minneapolis, we’re laser-focused on improving Veteran’s experience of care and this has borne fruit. In a recent survey, 92% of our Veteran’s expressed trust in the Minneapolis VA. It can be a hard battle and we’re in it with you.

As you peruse this year’s annual report, you’ll see that in the past year we’ve introduced new technologies to improve patient care in many of our programs.

We opened the Virtual Medical Room (VMR), an easy and inexpensive way for patients to see a provider from virtually anywhere. VMR is also used for patient education, triage, and giving a family member an opportunity to attend an appointment or family conference.

Minneapolis VA physical therapists offered a new piece of medical technology to help patients walk again. Called “Lite Run,” the device combines a walker with space suit technology. The air pressure fills the suit and lifts the patient off the ground.

The Education Service began offering VEText, a convenient message system to remind Veterans of appointments and allow them to confirm or cancel an appointment with a text message reply.

In our outreach efforts, we used the “Tele Town Hall” format to call 340 veterans in the Rochester area for a one-hour dialogue with senior leaders, reaching far more than the 25 or so who usually attend an in-person town hall.

Maximizing technology to better serve Veterans is laudable, but more important are our efforts to personalize care and treat all Veterans as individuals. To that end, we’ve ramped up our Customer Service program.

We’ve redoubled our Leadership Rounding, with senior managers talking with patients and staff to make sure we’re in touch with their needs and providing everyone the best opportunity to be successful.

Our “Red Vest” volunteer program, which has been modeled nationally, expanded to even more areas in our Medical Center and Clinics. We are blessed with dedicated volunteers and we couldn’t do our work without them.

We significantly improved time to answer and decreased dropped calls in our Call Center. This was based on direct Veteran feedback and we made it better.

I am proud to lead an organization of over 4,000 employees and more than 1,200 volunteers who work every day to provide the best care anywhere for the 103,000 Veterans getting their care in Minneapolis or one of our Community Based Outpatient Clinics.

This next year will challenge us to be even better as we implement the MISSION Act. I thank those Veterans who Choose VA and recommit to making the Minneapolis VA Health Care System the best care anywhere.

Patrick Kelly
Director
IMPROVING THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE

Among the many accomplishments in 2018, here are two that stand out. **WECARE** Leadership Rounding expanded from only senior executives to all senior managers. Twice a month, managers go to the clinical wards to talk with patients and staff. Afterward, comments are discussed and when necessary action plans instituted to address needs.

**KEY FACTS**

- 85% rated VA “excellent” and 8% very good on dignity and respect question
- 91.6% of Veterans trust the VA
- 98% said their room and bathroom were clean
- 100% said they feel welcome upon arrival to the hospice unit

The “Red Vest” volunteer program, which began in Minneapolis and was later instituted at all VA medical centers, expanded with more Red Vests in key parts of the facility, including helping disabled Veterans in the canteen.

**SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS**

- **EKG tech** assigned to specialty clinic on cardiology days to minimize patient travel.
- **Lab techs** assigned to cardiology clinic for blood draws to minimize patient travel.
- **Nutrition services** created an alternative low-carb selection for all meals. The menu layout was revised for easier selections.
- **Eye glass** order process automated, reducing order time from 9.24 days to 1.9 days.
- **Mental health** instituted tracking system to confirm appointment availability.
- **Spinal Cord Injury/Disorder Center** introduced a white board for bed usage to reduce time of unused or uncleaned room.
- **Pharmacy** took over smoking cessation program to streamline process of ordering patches and nicotine gum.
- **Imaging-service** created a program, Comfort Talks, to lower patients’ stress and anxiety, thus reducing the need of sedation during testing.
Heart Surgery Beamed from Minneapolis to Meeting in Germany

In June, two heart surgeries performed in the “Hybrid Operating Room” were filmed live and sent to a medical meeting in Frankfurt, Germany. The procedure – called Transcatheter aortic valve replacement (TAVR) - is an innovative, minimally invasive treatment for patients with severe aortic stenosis who are not candidates for open heart surgery. In conventional open-heart surgery, the damaged valve is removed and replaced with an artificial valve. More than 200 TAVRs have been performed at the Minneapolis VA.

Primary Care Move to 4th Floor Complete

The two remaining primary care “super clinics” (4E and 4F) opened on the fourth floor. The clinics were designed to incorporate the Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) Model where a medical team of primary care providers, RNs, LPNs, and MSAs work alongside mental health, pharmacists, dieticians, therapists and other team members within the same area.

Minneapolis VA physical therapists began using a new piece of medical technology to help patients walk again - Called “Lite Run,” the device combines a walker with space suit technology. The air pressure that fills the suit lifts the patient off the ground.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY 18 (days)</th>
<th>PRIMARY CARE</th>
<th>SPECIALTY CARE</th>
<th>MENTAL HEALTH</th>
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<td></td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>5.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minneapolis VA</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>10.30</td>
<td>2.26</td>
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</table>
Clinical Achievements

The Doctor Will See You Now in The “Virtual Medical Room”

The Virtual Medical Room (VMR) is an easy and inexpensive way for patients to see a provider from virtually anywhere. It helps patients who have difficulty traveling or who live far away. VMR is also used for patient education, triage, and giving a family member an opportunity to attend an appointment or family conference. According to a VA physician, “For some of my older patients with medical and physical barriers, coming to the clinic can be a hardship for them and their loved ones. If I can perform some basic assessments by VMR, I may be able to save the patient a drive in, and perhaps an ER visit or hospital admission. Conversely, I may also be able to get a sick patient into the hospital more quickly.”

Suicide Prevention Becomes Top Clinical Priority Under New Secretary

In 2018, the new VA Secretary Robert Wilkie announced that suicide prevention was the VA’s top clinical priority. The Minneapolis VA responded on several fronts. The suicide prevention team added three staff, including two case managers, one assigned to the northern Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) and another to the southern Minnesota CBOCs. A nurse-educator with a public health background also joined the team. The outreach and communications efforts also increased. More than 11,000 gunlocks were distributed at community events.

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

• Minneapolis VA Shows Improved Quality – Using a web-based scorecard that measure quality and efficiency, the VA released data that showed significant improvements at the majority of its facilities. Minneapolis VA improved 0.31 percent compared with the same period the year before. Specific areas of improvement included: readmission rates, wait times and telephone / call center access.

• VA community-based outpatient clinics in Hibbing and Ely, MN, became “VA staffed” on October 1 following five years of operation by a contractor.

• In October, the Minneapolis VA received federal funding for an additional 61 vouchers to help homeless veterans, for a total of 807. The HUD-VASH program combines rental assistance vouchers from HUD with case management and clinical services provided by VA

• A $4.9 million renovation of the Outpatient Mental Health area on the first floor of the Minneapolis VA Medical Center got underway in late 2018. The project includes eight new group rooms, more treatment rooms, additional offices and expanded waiting area.

More Women Veterans Seeking Care

<table>
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<th>Type of care</th>
<th>FY 2018 Unique patients</th>
<th>FY 2018 Encounters</th>
<th>FY 2017 Unique patients</th>
<th>FY 2017 Encounters</th>
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<td>4234</td>
<td>1570</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women's clinic gynecology</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>687</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>676</td>
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<tr>
<td>General primary care*</td>
<td>2853</td>
<td>6516</td>
<td>2704</td>
<td>5857</td>
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</table>

*Mixed-gender primary care clinics including community based outpatient clinics.
STUDY SHOWS OPIOIDS DON’T BEAT OTHER MEDS FOR CHRONIC PAIN

A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association by Minneapolis VA researchers showed strong evidence against using prescription opioids for chronic pain. The study involved 240 patients suffering chronic pain from 62 Minneapolis VA clinics who were assigned to use generic versions of opioids or nonopioids for a year. Patients with chronic back aches or hip or knee arthritis, opioids worked no better than over-the-counter drugs or other nonopioids at reducing problems with walking or sleeping. And they provided slightly less pain relief. The publication drew significant news media attention. Erin Krebs, MD, was the lead author.

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

- **Effort to Enroll Veterans in Clinical Trials** - Minneapolis is one of 12 sites in a partnership between VA and the National Cancer Institute to give Veterans more access to the latest treatment options.

- **DoD Funds Study of Mindfulness to Reduce Pain** - A Minneapolis VA researcher was named to head a 6-year, 750 patient study, funded by the Department of Defense, on the effectiveness of mindfulness to treat chronic pain and conditions such as PTSD, insomnia, depression and substance abuse.

- **Sleep Apnea Treatment Outcomes Same** - Patients with obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) can achieve similar outcomes with care from a sleep specialist or a non-sleep specialist. Researchers reviewed 12 published studies to evaluate the effectiveness and harms of care by non-sleep specialists versus sleep specialists for patients with suspected or diagnosed with OSA.

- **Lung Cancer Follow-up** - Minneapolis VA and CCDOR investigators developed a tracking tool for incidentally detected pulmonary nodules, lung cancer screening, and post-cancer resection follow-up.
VA OFFERS TEXT REMINDERS FOR APPOINTMENTS

In March 2018, the Minneapolis VA and its community-based outpatient clinics launched VEText, a convenient text message system to remind Veterans of appointments and allow them to confirm or cancel out of an appointment with a text message reply. In addition to the convenience offered to Veterans, the text messaging system allows VA to offer unused appointments to other Veterans. Every enrolled Veteran with a cell phone number listed in their health record is automatically enrolled in the program. The text messages do not replace the letters and automated phone calls Veterans already receive for appointment reminders, but provide another communication channel available between the VA and Veterans.

Excellence in Education Awards

Brionn Tonkin, MD, Physician – Academic Collaboration with Affiliate
Sarah Brady, RN, PACT Care Team Manager Excellence in Education
Peter Weissmann, MD, Physician– Interprofessional, Team-Based Learning

Education By The Numbers

Physician and dental residents and fellows – 614
Medical students – 378
Combined allied health students – 549
VANAP nursing students – 16
Affiliated institutions – 56

EDUCATION DAY EVENT FEATURES
POPULAR JOURNALIST

Minnesota Public Radio and Twin Cities Public Television personality Cathy Wurzer delivered the Education Day keynote to an overflow crowd in the Minneapolis VA auditorium.
**MINNEAPOLIS VA ONLY 4TH FACILITY IN MINNESOTA TO RECEIVE ALS CERTIFICATION**

The Minneapolis VA Health Care System was named a Certified Treatment Center of Excellence by the ALS Association. ALS stands for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease, a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and the spinal cord. The Minneapolis VA is the fourth Minnesota health care system to receive the designation. The others are Mayo Clinic in Rochester, University of Minnesota and Hennepin County Medical Center. Only four VA centers have received this designation. The Minneapolis VA cares for 60-65 ALS patients.

**Minneapolis Scores 4 Stars in VA’s Annual Quality Rating Report**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FY15</th>
<th>FY16</th>
<th>FY17</th>
<th>FY18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 Star (5)</td>
<td>5 Star (9)</td>
<td>5 Star (9)</td>
<td>4 Star (22)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Minneapolis VA Received Leadership status in LGBTQ Healthcare Equality Index, which evaluates policies and practices related to the equity and inclusion of their LGBTQ patients, visitors and employees.

- The Minneapolis VA was rated a 4-star facility for overall nursing home care, using federal Medicare/Medicaid data among the 133 VA’s with nursing homes (also called community living centers).
MAGAZINE RECOGNIZES TOP VA DOCTORS

The July 2018 “Top Doctors” issue of Minneapolis/St. Paul magazine featured several Minneapolis VA physicians: neurosurgeon Uzma Samadani, MD, who was featured on the cover; Gary Goldish, MD, and Stephanie Boyle, MD, physical medicine and rehabilitation; vascular surgeon Steve Santilli, MD; neurologist Ezgi Tiryaki, MD; pathologist J. Carlos Manivel, MD; and psychiatrist Susan Czapiewski, MD. A number of University of Minnesota physicians who do clinical work at the VA were recognized: Sara Shumway, MD, and Rosemary Kelly, MD, cardiac surgeons; dermatologist Erin Warshaw, MD; and Charles Billington, MD, endocrinologist.

VACO Honors Minneapolis VA ‘Innovators’ in Washington, DC

Automated Report to Track Ventilator Associated Events – PreVENT Track – SPARK Project by Dr. Peter Duane; The Veteran Amputee: A Prosthetic Sock Management Tool for Fit and Comfort – SPARK Project by Billie Slater; Home Based Palliative Care Consultation – SEED Project by Edward Ratner.

Other projects: Urgent Meds for Non-VA Hospitalizations and ED Visits – Dr. Wei (Denise) Duan-Porter and Lisa Anderson; New IV Clamp to Prevent Medication Errors – Dr. Gary Goldish (presented by – Michelle Flemming)

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

1. Abertine Beard, MD, Medical Staff Clinical Excellence
2. Wayne Siegel, PhD, MN Psychology Association award
3. Sid Bell, Logistics, Medical Center Supervisor of Year
4. Aasma Shaukat, MD, Society of Clinical Investigators
5. Hallie Boyd, BSN American Jounal of Nursing article

5 NAMED RISING STARS

The April 2018 issue of Minneapolis/St. Paul magazine named five Minneapolis VA physicians as “rising stars” in their respective fields based on a survey of their peers. They are:

- Patricia Dickmann, MD, Psychiatry
- Derick Green, MD, Surgery
- Morgan Pansegrau, MD, Ophthalmology
- Alexa Pragman, MD, Infectious Diseases
- Scott A. Reule, MD, Nephrology
Staffers Go the Extra Mile

Rochester CBOC Nurse Stops to Help Woman Suffering Seizure

Enroute to work, Rochester VA Community-Based Outpatient Clinic nurse Shari Kjos, LPN, observed a car on the side of the road, with a woman waving her arms frantically, trying to get people to stop (with no success). As Shari maneuvered her car to a place that was safe to pull over, she noticed that the front of the stopped vehicle was badly damaged. The driver was the woman’s daughter, who had experienced a seizure while driving and rear-ended the vehicle in front of them. The mother had completed one minute of CPR before trying to get help. Shari took over and instructed the driver of the other vehicle to call 911; she continued CPR until medics arrived.

Three VA Nurses Help Victims Of Traffic Accident

VA nurses Julie Neisius, RN, Spinal Cord Injury/Disorder Center, and Denise Frein, LPN, outpatient pain clinic, were enroute to work in their respective vehicles on Hwy 55 southeast of the cities shortly after 7 am on November 27 when traffic slowed due to an auto accident. Once they moved a safe distance beyond the scene, they got out of their vehicles and assisted the two drivers until EMTs arrived. One driver had apparently suffered a broken arm and concussion; the other also had a concussion. A third VA nurse also stopped and aided Julie and Denise. Many cars continued to drive by; only the VA nurses stopped by help.

HR Staff Members Assist Veteran In Apparent Distress

Katie Gaines, Joe Henry, Ashley Jenkins and Ginny Johnson were out for a stroll on their afternoon break, enjoying the fresh air and exercise around the outskirts of the campus in early June. Little did they know their walk would be cut short by potentially saving someone’s life. Joe noticed a man appearing distressed, who said he recently suffered a heart attack and felt he was having another one. Joe yelled ahead to his co-workers to get help. Ashley ran to the medical center and told the security guards to call for an ambulance. Ginny and Katie came back to get the man to an area where he could rest and wait for an ambulance. Ginny ran ahead to the ED to make sure staff were ready for him.

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

- Twin sisters and VA nurses Christine Spevacek and Trisha Vilen along with Drs. Brionn Tonkin and Alex Senk served as medical volunteers at the disabled veterans winter sports clinic in Snowmass, Colorado.
- On a sub-freezing night in January, social workers Emma Akers and Jonathan Priess packed on an extra layer of clothing to participate in the annual Point-in-Time count to identify homeless people.
TOP VACO LEADERS VISIT MINNEAPOLIS VA HEALTH CARE FACILITIES

Jake Leinenkugel (left photo), special advisor to the President on Veterans Affairs, addressed veterans at the Chippewa Falls VA clinic in July. VA secretary Robert Wilkie (center photo, with Minneapolis VA director Patrick Kelly) and VA Principal Undersecretary for Health Richard Stone (right) were in the Cities for the annual American Legion Convention.

Minnesota Vikings players and Legends made their 8th annual visit to the medical center in November, spending time with CLC and Spinal Cord Center patients and families.

Minnesota Wild hockey players made their first visit to VA, and plan to return again.

University of Minnesota Medical School Dean Jakub Tolar, MD, gave the keynote address to a packed auditorium on Research Day.

US Army Colonel Angela Steward Randle delivered women’s health month address.
TOWN HALLS, STAND DOWNS, OPEN HOUSES, TRAIN ADS AND MILITARY RADIO HOUR

- Minneapolis VA intensified its community outreach efforts in 2018, holding five town halls (Superior WI, Minneapolis, Richfield, Anoka and Chippewa Falls WI), nine open houses at community-based outpatient clinics and one tele townhall with 340 patients in the Rochester area.
- The suicide prevention team notched 59 educational events with its expanded staff.
- Minneapolis VA homeless program staffed two MACV “homeless stand downs” in Minneapolis and Duluth and three other events.
- VA outreach committee and eligibility were present at many other gatherings, including gun shows.
- Transitional case managers (formerly OEF/OIF) were present at 53 military and civilian events.
- The women’s clinic held a major event for Veterans.

Light Rail Trains Promote VA Health

For four months (June-September), three metro trains between St. Paul and Minneapolis carried a wrapped advertisement urging veterans to ChooseVA care. Ramsey County has a high percentage of eligible, unenrolled Veterans.

VA Leaders and Experts Reach Thousands On Minnesota Military Radio Hour

Every Sunday morning, 52 radio stations in the state carry a one-hour broadcast called Minnesota Military Radio Hour. Minneapolis VA director or a designee gives a monthly update on activities in the health care system. Once a month, a researcher or clinician goes in depth on a particular health topic with an in-studio interview.
The annual Salute to Hospitalized Veterans brings together local service organizations, congressional staff and beauty queens for visits to patients. Military Order of the Purple Heart also provides a prime rib dinner, and Valentine’s Day cards from local school children are disseminated throughout the hospital.

Minnesota Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH) veteran and service officer Willie Pargo was honored for 15,000 hours of voluntary service to the Minneapolis VA during the annual volunteer appreciation banquet.

BY THE NUMBERS

Volunteers 1,289 .......................................New volunteers 271
Hours of Service 180,586 .............................Value in FTE 96
Average hours/volunteer 140 .....................Volunteer Hourly Value $4,458,668
Monetary Donations $292,579 ...................Activity Donations $13,824
Item Donations $688,379 ............................Total Donations $994,782

Total Resource Impact $5,453,450
Volunteer transportation network logged 1,191,525 miles, serving 24,238 Veterans in FY2018.
**Annual Report 2018**

**Vital Stats**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Patients</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Minneapolis, MN</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northwest Metro, MN</td>
<td>9,565</td>
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<tr>
<td>Twin Ports, WI</td>
<td>8,474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maplewood, MN</td>
<td>7,577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chippewa Valley, WI</td>
<td>4,975</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rochester, MN</td>
<td>4,865</td>
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<tr>
<td>Albert Lea, MN</td>
<td>3,879</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shakopee, MN</td>
<td>3,538</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hibbing, MN</td>
<td>3,703</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mankato, MN (Lyle C. Pearson)</td>
<td>3,490</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rice Lake, WI</td>
<td>3,143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Jame, MN</td>
<td>2,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minneapolis, MN Community Resource Center</td>
<td>1,686</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ely</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**UNIQUE PATIENT TOTALS** 102,580

*Many Minneapolis patients are also enrolled in CBOC's.*

**Outpatient Visits** 980,427

**Adult Day Care**
- 35 patients per day
- Active enrolled
- 75-80 patients

**FYTD Rural / Highly Rural Uniques** 47,661

**% Rural / Highly Rural** 46.5%

**Acute Care Beds**
- Average Daily Census: 154
- Average Length of stay: 6.84 days

**Community Living Center**
- Average Daily Census: 63
- Average Length of stay: 34.93 days

**Pharmacy Total**
- Outpatient Prescriptions: 1,884,517.00
- Monthly: 157,043.00

**FY18 Lab Reports**
- Lab Tests: 3,446,084
- Blood Draws: 79,435

**Flu Vaccinations** 46,860 (including given at Walgreens)

**ANNUAL BUDGET** $992,920,932

**Staffing Totals**

**MEDICAL STAFF**
- MDs: 364
- Psychiatrists: 44
- Psychologists: 112
- Dentists: 20
- Physician Assistants: 36
- NURSING Staff: 1499
- RNs: 1192
- LPNs: 161
- Nursing Assistants: 123
- APRNs: 83
- CRNAs: 35
- TOTAL: 4608
- Veteran Employees: 1109

**ACCESS TO CARE FY18 NATIONAL STANDINGS ALL APPTS (90.50%) WITHIN 30 DAYS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minneapolois</th>
<th>New</th>
<th>Established</th>
<th>Appointments Completed &lt;= 30 Days</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MENTAL HEALTH</td>
<td>3350</td>
<td>77614</td>
<td>98.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRIMARY CARE</td>
<td>6209</td>
<td>142854</td>
<td>96.65%</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPECIALTY</td>
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