



The Australian Society for Medical Research NEWSLETTER

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August, 1998

Peter Doherty Tours Australia



Recruit a New Member
Budget Outcome - 3 views
AMRAD Doherty Tour
NSC 1998 - Abstract Time
ASMR Board Election

ASMR Election Announcement

Nominations are being called for one position on the ASMR National Board. For more information contact the ASMR head office, or your local board member.

1998 is not over yet and ASMR has plenty to do before the year is out. Happily the feared short fall in the NHMRC budget was avoided and the endowment funding base has been increased. This might sound a bit like figure shuffling. It is and it isn't. The increased base is less vulnerable to tampering and is seen by the Dept. of Finance as a recurring cost every year. Well done to Minister Wooldridge on that score. However, in real terms the dollars to H&MR has not really increased as initially hailed by the press.

The Health Minister, like us, is now awaiting two very important events. The outcomes of the Wills review into H&MR and of course the Federal election. Much has changed on the political landscape since the last Newsletter. Another political player is on the scene, a player yet to formulate a H&MR policy. And we are still waiting to hear from the ALP on the specifics of their H&MR policy. In addition, the power of Senator Harradine has increased. He has a history of influencing the NHMRC appointment process and may find it opportune to bargain to change research funding priorities if given a chance. All these observations clearly highlight the need to continue the Society's dialogue with politicians - to continue our contacts with all parties in parliaments, keep on with our submissions to government reviews and engage the public in creative ways to tell them about what H&MR means to their health.

We need your help to do this! ASMR has approximately 1100 financial members. Membership fees support our head office and a very busy Executive Officer. Over the last year through the support of most of our affiliates we have contracted a professional lobbyist who advised us on the pending NHMRC deficit and on other budget/political issues. His advice has been spot on. We have learnt how valuable such advice is, but it costs money. We know that if every member recruited just a single new member we could expand our lobbying activities. Explain to a colleague how ASMR is working to improve H&MR funding. A membership form is on the back page, please use it. *Rob Ramsay Editor*

ASMR Board Of Directors 1998

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Congratulations to -



Two eminent Australian researchers have recently been recognised for their research in the area of human cancer. ASMR congratulates Professor Tony Burgess, Director of the Ludwig Institute of Cancer Research who was made a Companion of the Order of Australia in this years Queen's Birthday Honours. Prof. Burgess was recognised for "service to scientific research and clinical medicine particularly through research into the early diagnosis and treatment of cancer, and for developing structures to link diverse research units to facilitate the exchange of information and protocols for the most effective means of treating cancer"

Professor Suzanne Cory, Director of the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research, has been awarded the Charles S. Mott Medal at the Library of Congress in Washington for her research which made "outstanding contributions related to the causes and prevention of human cancer". She shared the \$250,000 award with Prof. Stanley Korsmeyer of Washington University.



Steve Wesselingh:-President's Report

Dear Colleague,

The following report is a summary of recent events for your information.

Budget Campaign: ASMR's campaign has been successful in that the projected 30% reduction in NHMRC funding has been avoided and an ongoing base level commitment has been established at around \$165 million per annum (indexed). Undoubtedly funds are still insufficient and we will

continue a close liaison with government on behalf of the H&MR community.

Wills Review: Our submission to the Wills Review has been well received. ASMR's views have been sought and widely quoted by many interested stakeholders in their own submissions. The Wills Strategic Review of Medical Research in Australia is to report to the Minister in September 1998.

Federal Election: The Society will continue its campaign to increase investment in H&MR to 5% of total health funding. During the course of the election campaign, I anticipate calling upon all members to write and/or visit MP's, particularly those in marginal electorates.

Medical Research Week, 1998 was an outstanding success. Dr Peter Doherty, through his lectures and talks, has inspired the research community to pursue science with increased vigour. He has raised the profile of H&MR in Australia by speaking to the public, to politicians, corporate leaders, students, primary school children and the media. I thank Dr Doherty for his good humour and generosity in terms of both time and energy. It is the intention of the Board of Directors of ASMR to recommend Dr Doherty be elected to Life Membership of the Society at the Annual General Meeting in November.

Election of Directors: There is one vacancy for a Director this year. My term of office as President concludes at the AGM; Matt Gillespie will be taking over from that time. The term of office for the new Director elected this year will be from November 1998 to November 2000. Directors on the Board of ASMR have the opportunity to contribute enormously to the H&MR community. I would hope we receive a number of nominations and that nominees will be aware of, and committed to, fulfilling the obligations of a Director in service to the Society.

1998 Budget - What it means for H&MR Funding - 3 views; ASMR, AAS, FASTS

ASMR- NHMRC Budget black hole closed.

The budget revealed that the projected 30% reduction in NHMRC funding has been avoided. Although media releases indicated that the NHMRC would receive an injection of \$50m a year from 1999-2000, this will not be money additional to that the NHMRC currently receives. Two 4 year investments of \$35m and \$25m complete funding rounds in 1997-98 and 1998-1999. The \$173.6m of additional funds announced in the 98 budget will redress the projected drop (30%) in research funding from 1998 onwards. Importantly, the base funding of the endowment has been lifted to include the ~\$60m cited above. This is a very significant development rectifying a problem created by the previous government's topping up of the base with short term funds. Presumably, we will not have to re-fight to maintain status quo for the existing base, but we have our sights set on the a comparable level of funding enjoyed by the USA NIH.

We believe that the decision to rectify this projected allocation to the NHMRC reflects the strong relationship that the ASMR has with the Minister. Undoubtedly the funds are still insufficient, however it was not practical to expect an increase in the NHMRC budget prior to the Wills review which reports to the Minister in September. ASMR will continue its endeavours to increase the funding base for the NHMRC, particularly via its privied position as a stakeholder on the Wills review and prior to the next Federal election. Breakdown of the budget figures for health can be found at www.health.gov.au - *Matthew Gillespie and Rob Ramsay*

NHMRC Funding

1997-98	\$168.0m
1998-99	\$176.0m
1999-2000	\$170.1m
2000-01	\$173.9m
2001-02	\$175.4m

Response from the Australian Academy of Science - Higher Education Still Loosing Out

"The encouraging fiscal outcome in the 1998-1999 Federal Budget is welcomed by the AAS which sees it as a major opportunity for creating a knowledge economy for Australia on a sound financial base. The Academy looks forward to a pre-election statement that should address matters untouched by the budget papers. These include a recognition that a knowledge economy requires vertical integration of major industrial investment, stimulation and support programs for industry, of industry-higher education linkages, and a sound higher-education system to attract 'major industrial players' to Australia".

The research side of Australian industry has been supported in the past by the syndicated and 150% tax concession schemes. It is alleged that 2.4 billion dollars over four years has been saved by the modification of this scheme to a 125% tax concession. There is anecdotal evidence that industrial research is faltering from the excellent growth shown over the previous ten years. The budget papers suggest that this might be true as it appears that the take up of the START funds has been slower than expected (page 4-83 budget paper No 1) It is extremely important that either the START scheme be made to work

The budget of the ARC needs to be addressed

or that complementary schemes - which the Academy could suggest be placed alongside it - to use the potential of the available cohort of Australian graduates.

The continued support for the CRC linkage program is welcomed and the announced new round is strongly supported. The drop in funds until 2001 may need to be reassessed in the light of the strength of the new proposals. The higher education system with a record number of new undergraduate places appears healthy with an announced funding of 5.5 billion dollars for 1998/99. Disaggregation of these figures, however, reveals a government saving, by comparison of the 1997 and 1998 forward estimates, of about three billion dollars for the 1998-9 and 1999-00 budget years. The Academy strongly recommends that priority be given to reinvestment of some of these funds (released, presumably by higher HECS and fees payments) into creating diversity and excellence in the higher education system suitable for the knowledge economy challenge facing Australia. The budget of the ARC needs to be addressed in the same context. The estimates for 1998-99 hardly differ from those of 1997-98 and there are new challenges. Extra support for the new NH&MRC is welcomed, as is support to the DIST science agencies.

TOXICITY TESTING

Pharmatox is a well established toxicology laboratory working to international guidelines of the OECD and is a GLP and GMP registered laboratory, specialising in pre-clinical toxicology including pharmacokinetics, toxicokinetics and a wide range of pharmacopoeal tests.

Pharmatox

For further information contact:

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Tel: (02) 9654 1623 FAX (02) 9654 1754

FASTS: The Budget of lost opportunities

FASTS was disappointed with the Budget. Professor Peter Cullen, FASTS president, said that once again Australia seemed to be missing opportunities. "By dithering we are likely to continue to miss the boat in the biotechnology revolution in the same way as we missed the boat in information technology in the 80s and 90s. The Government seems bereft of ideas. Competitive success in the next century will be won by countries which follow the knowledge-based path, to generate real and enduring employment. This requires a strong science base and smart programs to link industry with science. This needs strong leadership from Government."

ARC funding has collapsed, with a drop from \$445 to \$383 million over two years.

Professor Cullen said the Government had clawed back considerable funds from the university sector and wound down the tax R&D incentive to industry. This was on the grounds that it wanted to target its investments more strategically. "But we are still waiting. There is nothing in this Budget to stimulate innovation and new technology," He noted that the START scheme - an incentive for industry R&D - appeared to be failing, and urged the Government to develop new and better ways of stimulating the innovation process. He said that the foundations for innovation lie in higher education and basic research, and these areas continued to be eroded. "The level of public funding appears to have decreased by over 7% as the cost burden is shifted to students and their parents."

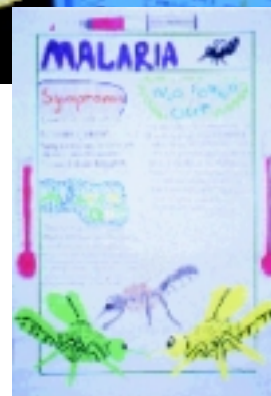
Basic research funding through the ARC has collapsed, with a drop from \$445 million to \$383 million over two years. "These cuts appear to be in the funding of research infrastructure and the funding of collaborative research. Such cuts are very short sighted," he said. "On the bright side, we welcome the Government's strong support for the CRC program and that they have restored the cuts they made last year to the NHMRC".

ASMR Medical Research Week and AMRAD Peter Doherty National Tour

Thanks to all participants for your contributions to the outstanding success of Medical Research Week in 1998. The State committees worked tirelessly to run scientific meetings and to present H&MR to the general community. There were many tight moments but the ingenuity and adaptable organisers produced the best MRW ever and the first National MRW program. Without doubt our guest made so much of the week possible. We owe a great debt of gratitude to Dr Peter Doherty for his participation in this physically demanding tour for ASMR. Dr Doherty travelled to every capital city and spoke on behalf of medical research in an informed and inspiring way. However, perhaps the lasting impact of his tour will be his influence on the primary school pupils whom he met as part of the AMRAD poster competition. The quality and artistic flair of the posters was fantastic and their subject matter reflected glory upon the achievements of past Australian medical researchers.



SA - Liam Brassil & Matt Geisler



Many excited school children across Australia were inspired to study science following a visit to their school by Prof Doherty. The ceremonies often included the whole school, parents and friends. The AMRAD Primary School Poster Competition winners in each state were presented with a mountain bike and \$1800 for their school.

QLD Amanda Chisholm, 10, Shailer Park State School
 NSW Jacqui Wilson, Urana Central School
 SA Liam Brassil & Matt Geisler, Cabra College, Cumberland Park
 TAS Stacey Tapner, 11, Springfield Gardens Primary School
 VIC Salvatore Zuccara, St Johns Primary School, Footscray
 WA Lauren Webb, Chidlow Primary School



Queensland MRW was opened at the beginning of the Health and Medical research Expo at the Sciencentre by Prof Peter Doherty. There were 23 exhibitors at the Expo and about 1000 people attended. The finalists in the 10th year of the AMP Queensland Biomedical Research Awards presented their work in the Bancroft Auditorium at QIMR. The finalists were pre-doctoral: Mark Kepper, John Hooper, Stephanie Williams, and post-doctoral: Jeremy Arnold, Wenda Shurety and Ian Peak. All gave excellent presentations, Mark Kepper as the pre-doctoral winner and Wenda Shurety won in the post-doctoral category. The dinner was addressed by Stephen Woodward from Protocol Management Group and his presentation was very well received. Hopefully he inspired many of the people to follow through with some of his suggestions for effective lobbying for Medical Research. We will soon be setting up the committee for MRW 99 and will be looking for support from Qld ASMR members. Unfortunately our state committee president, Janet Keast, is going away on sabbatical so we will be needing someone to fill the "hot seat". Janet has been the mainstay of the Qld ASMR branch for a number of years and will be greatly missed.



QLD Shailer Park State School P
 Chadwich Harding, Amanda C
 Trent Hansen



L-R: Ian Peak, Stephanie Williams,
 Mark Kepper, Brian Richards (AMP),
 Wenda Shurety, John Hooper, Jeremy Arnold

NSW held a scientific meeting at the Australian Museum. A number of prizes were awarded at the cocktail party - Bio-Rad Technical Prize: Mr Fernando Santiago, Eli Lilly Student Prize (oral): Mr Paul Stathakis, Eli Lilly Student Prize (poster): Ms Louise van der Weyden, Eli Lilly Post-doctoral Prize: Dr Paul Hodges, University of Sydney Medal: Dr Greta Duglison. A public lecture was given by Peter Doherty at the town hall which highlighted the historical strengths of Australian Medical Research and provided an excellent summary of the immediate challenges faced by the Australian Medical Research Community. Career sessions were held with approximately 130 students at each session. Sponsored by Uni. of Sydney, Prof. Richmond Jeremy delivered information on the Uni. of Sydney Graduate Medical Program. A display booth provided Uni course information. The speakers presented excellent summaries of their experiences as medical researchers, and explained their personal decisions when choosing this career pathway.





Victoria's MRW Expo was launched by Mr. Robert Doyle (MP), Parl. Sec. for Health at Melbourne Central. 26 Institutes and Departments shared their research with the general public using interactive displays, models, computers and free health checks. The AMGEN Award for Medical Research was presented at a luncheon to Dr Mark Smyth. The Department of Human Services sponsored a series of secondary school student career information sessions which ran twice a day for the entire week. Five Medical Research Public Lectures were presented to the general public by leading researchers. Prof Peter Doherty addressed nearly 700 medical researchers and their supporters, along with Mr Robert Knowles, Minister for Health, who described new initiatives the Vic Government is making in Medical Research support. The AMRAD Medical Journalism Awards and the Science Image of the Year award (Mark Lam) were presented by John Grace. Presentation of the Premiers's Award for Medical Research was made a week after MRW at Government House by the Premier, Mr Kennett. This years winner was Jefferey Boyle, and commendations were awarded to Helen Burgess, Desiree du Sart and Ingrid Scheffer.

WA hosted a 'research stakeholders' meeting with Peter Doherty, in conjunction with Deryck Schreuder, Vice Chancellor, Uni of WA. Representatives from tertiary institutions, teaching hospitals, the Dept. of Health, state and federal ministers attended an 'informal' brunch. This forum allowed all who attended to get a perspective of what the WA community saw as the critical issues facing research. Peter Doherty gave a riveting talk at the dinner. Several high school attendees were thrilled to receive their secondary school poster competition prize from Australia's newest Nobel Prize laureate. Country school students from



years 10-12 were given tours of several labs, visited SciTech, and attended the schools information evening, along with students from metropolitan Perth. Two evening public fora proved popular, one on 'Hormone Replacement Therapy, Friend or Foe' and the second on 'Obesity- new strategies for an old problem'. Considerable media interest was generated resulting in radio and television interviews. A 'Health Expo' was held for the first time in the heart of the Perth CBD. A huge Marquee housed displays from all the major tertiary institutions, institutes and teaching hospitals. The majority of the displays were interactive and were viewed by thousands of visitors. Finally, we co-hosted a forum with the Scientific Suppliers Association as part of their Sci-West trade exposition. Three notable speakers addressed ways of improving the interface between medical research and industry.

Tasmania kicked off with four research presentations part of the 'Grand Round' seminar series at the Royal Hobart Hospital. Prof. Allan Canty, the acting pro-VC of Research, Uni. Tas, opened MRW, along with the Minister for Community Services and Health, the Hon Peter McKay, who announced substantial new funds for medical research, and foreshadowed the impending launch of the Royal Hobart Hospital Research Foundation. Mr McKay also presented prizes to all the poster category winners, the overall winner was Ms K Doherty. Prof Doherty gave an inspiring and entertaining address at the Literary Luncheon. Research was on display in the Elizabeth St. Mall, and featured local WIN news-reader Tom Payne having his blood pressure taken. The verdict was positive, and Tasmanians can look forward to a further 25 years of Tom at the Newsdesk! A quiz night attracted almost 100 competitors, in spite of the fact that a whole round of questions required a detailed knowledge of the 70 Research Posters submitted this year! A diverse range of Tasmanian research was presented at 'A glimpse of medical research in Tasmania', for local GPs by the Postgraduate Education Committee. Finally the 1998 Buttfield Scholar, Dr Bruce Taylor, gave a presentation 'From bugs to Barre', exploring the link between bacterial infection and neuropathology.



SA. The week started with School's Day with 50-60 Year 12 science students from local schools visiting labs at the Flinders Medical Centre and attended talks on careers in medical research. The Annual Scientific Meeting was held at the Orphanage Teacher's Centre. Prof John Mathews (Head, Menzies School of Health Research, Darwin) spoke on "Understanding Aboriginal Health - Social and Biological Perspectives". A forum was held on the issue of "Why do a PhD in Medical Research?". The quality of student presentations were particularly high this year. The New Investigator Award winners were Ross Wishart Memorial Award - Leonie Heilbronn, Ansett Australia Award

AMRAD Journalism Awards - John Grace presenting to Norman Swan on behalf of the ABC



(oral) - Liza-Jane Raggatt, Ansett Australia Award (poster) - Kim Hemsley, Best Undergraduate Award - Ayan Dasvarma. The Dinner was attended by twice as many people in the past with Peter Doherty clearly a major drawcard! The MC was Keith Conlan from Channel 9. In attendance were various captains of industry, sponsors representatives, media, senior hospital and university representatives, clinicians, researchers and students. There were 10 federal and state politicians at the dinner, including Senators Robert Hill and Meg Lees, Ms Trish Worth (parl.sec. to Michael Woolldridge) and Martyn Evans. Meg, Martyn and Trish presented brief presentations on their parties strategies on health and medical research. The highlight was of course Peter Doherty's presentation which totally captivated the audience! The evening promoted lots of discussion and active lobbying on health and medical research issues and was enjoyed by all!

or Campbell meets with the press in WA



NARF's Position on Enterprise Bargaining

The ASMR Newsletter (May 1998, p.5) contained a very timely article drawing attention to the concerns as to how enterprise bargaining (EB) has affected the viability of NHMRC- and ARC-funded research at universities. It is certainly true that, in many laboratories across the country, the NHMRC grants scheme is currently in financial chaos because of the way some universities have chosen to interpret the workplace EB agreements now in place. These agreements were negotiated in the knowledge that this government, and the one before it, had refused to provide any new money to fund increased salaries for staff. The EB salary gap was to be met from institution funds.

The premise that universities can declare themselves unable to fund the EB salary gap for NHMRC and ARC grant-funded researchers, yet at the same time pocket the infrastructure funds these grants attract, ignores the financial reality of the researcher-university relationship. If grants are denuded of maintenance monies or made non-viable in other ways (e.g. low morale of staff resulting from enforced fractional appointments), then they will ultimately fail and not be replaced. For every dollar a university fails to invest in NHMRC and ARC researchers (by meeting their EB salary gaps), it stands to lose over eight dollars in DEETYA infrastructure money. Of this, over a half (the Research Quotient) can legitimately be used to pay EB salary gaps for any of the university's employees. Thus NHMRC and ARC researchers and the grants they attract represent an investment with a return in excess of 800%. Forward thinking universities will not see these investments vanish or migrate elsewhere because they took the short term and expedient course of declaring themselves unable to find the EB gap for grant-funded researchers.

Financial incentives aside, treating grant-funded researchers differently to equivalent "university" staff creates an unnecessary and undesirable division. Those paid primarily through NHMRC and ARC grants are just as much employees of their host institutions as are those funded through operating grants, and should be treated the same.

National Association of Research Fellows of NHMRC (NARF)

For every dollar a university fails to invest in NHMRC and ARC researchers (by meeting their EB salary gaps), it stands to lose over eight dollars in DEETYA infrastructure money.

Howard Florey Centenary Celebrations

In 1998 events throughout Australia will be held to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Howard Florey's birth. The aims are to promote recognition of Florey as a great Australian Scientist, to increase interest in the study of science in primary and secondary schools, and to celebrate Australia's achievements in biomedical and scientific research. (www.tallpoppies.net.au/florey)

The Florey Centenary Committee's Symposium "After Antibiotics - where to now?" will be held on Friday September 18 at the ABC Iwaki Auditorium, Southbank, 2:00 - 5:30 pm. Speakers include Profs Nancy Millis, Harold Attwood, John Turnbridge, Dr. Peter Colligon and Prof. Marty Rosenberg from Philadelphia, USA. The "Tall Poppy" Planting Party will be held that evening at the Crown River Room, Southbank where the Hon. Robert Knowles and Hon. Phillip Gude will officiate.



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 Australian Diabetes Society
 Australian Neuroscience Society
 Australian Physiological & Pharmacological Society
 Australian Rheumatology Association
 Australian Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
 Australian Society for Psychiatric Research
 Australian Society for Reproductive Biology
 Australian Society for the Study of Obesity
 Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand
 Clinical Oncology Society of Australia
 Endocrine Society of Australia
 Fertility Society of Australia
 Gastroenterological Society of Australia
 Haematology Society of Australia
 High Blood Pressure Research Council of Australia
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 New Associate Member - Australian Red Cross Blood Service

LET'S TACKLE THE HIGH COST OF JOURNALS - We are all aware of the escalating cost of scientific journals. For most Australian libraries, this has meant an erosion of journal collections. We have lost straightforward access to an absolutely essential resource. The band-aid schemes instituted to deal with this, such as interlibrary loans, are poor substitutes for regular, direct access. An increasing number of well-established journals are available electronically at no cost, but some are free on a trial basis for one year only. What will happen after this time is not clear, although publishing houses will obviously want to be paid for this service. This may involve a subscription-style payment, a fee for each edition viewed, or for each article downloaded. Electronic journals are cheap to run in comparison with printed versions. The same editorial infrastructure is required but the "distribution" costs are limited to maintaining a server with sufficient capacity. I have no insight into the detailed economics of producing a scientific journal, but the publishers do not pay for all of the work reported in them, the editorial supervision and peer reviewing is usually done at little cost to the publisher, and the main expenses appear to be printing, distribution and marketing. Scientists, or their institutions, then buy this information back. I believe that the advent of electronic journals is an excellent opportunity for the scientific professional bodies to reclaim their own science and to reverse the decline in the availability of scientific journals. Many of the journals that are now available in printed form are either produced by scientific societies, or were originally. We as scientists "own" the science, and we now have the opportunity to "own" collectively the means for making it available as widely as possible to our colleagues, at an affordable price. This movement must start somewhere. Australia is an admittedly small player on the world scientific scene, but in many fields our science is second to none. As a start, Australian scientific societies could produce all Australia-based scientific journals electronically, with a price structure for readers based on cost recovery. We should pressure all international scientific societies of which we are members to do the same. I believe the issue of returning science to scientists should appear on the agenda of all of Australian scientific societies as soon as possible.
Timothy Miles, Physiology, Uni. of Adelaide

The Foundation for High Blood Pressure Research wishes to advertise a postdoctoral fellowship for a research project in blood pressure regulation, hypertension or associated cardiovascular diseases. The Foundation would particularly welcome clinical or public health research projects, as well as basic biomedical science. It is to be undertaken at an Australian research institution and is available for up to two years from 1 January 1999. Closing date 28th August, 1998.

For further information please contact:

Professor Warwick P Anderson, Department of Physiology, Monash University

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Fax: 03 9905 2566

E-mail: w.anderson@med.monash.edu.au

NEW MEMBERS

Apr 21 1998 to Jun 30 1998

New South Wales

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