

An Analysis of Professor Dong Sheng's Thought on Treating Chronic Kidney Disease with Both Cold and Warm Therapies

Ai Ying¹, Dong Sheng^{2,*}

¹School of Graduate Studies, Shaanxi University of Chinese Medicine, Xianyang 712046, Shaanxi, China

²Affiliated Hospital of Shaanxi University of Chinese Medicine, Xianyang 712000, Shaanxi, China

*Correspondence Author

Abstract: *The combined cold and warm prescription method was proposed in the “Nei Jing” as the concept of “harmonizing cold and heat”, emphasizing the need to consider both yin and yang when treating complex diseases. This idea has been known to medical practitioners since then. In “Shang Han Lun”, Zhang Zhongjing created prescriptions such as Ban Xia Xie Xin Tang and Wugai Pill, which have the effect of balancing cold and heat. In subsequent developments, Li Dongyuan and Wu Jutong, among others, improved methods such as “sour opening and bitter suppression” and “ascending yang and purging fire”, expanding the application scope. Chronic kidney disease often involves both cold and heat syndromes, such as kidney yang deficiency combined with damp-heat and blood stasis. The combined cold and warm prescription method can achieve a balance of both the symptoms and the root cause. In addition, it can enhance efficacy and reduce toxicity, avoiding the damage to yang qi caused by using cold drugs alone or the aggravation of heat by using warm drugs. In modern combined treatment with traditional Chinese and Western medicine, the combined cold and warm prescription method has been found to be widely applicable to urinary tract infections, chronic nephritis, and renal failure.*

Keywords: Combined Cold and Warm Prescriptions, Chronic Kidney Disease, Urinary Tract Infection, Chronic Renal Failure.

1. Introduction

1.1 Current Situation and Difficulties in the Treatment of Chronic Kidney Disease

Renal diseases, among which chronic kidney disease (CKD) is caused by various reasons and involves chronic kidney structural and functional disorders (chronic kidney damage history of more than 3 months), including pathological damage to the kidneys with normal or abnormal GFR, abnormal blood or urine components, and abnormal imaging examinations, or GFR decline ($< 60 \text{ ml/min} \cdot 1.73\text{m}^2$) for more than 3 months, have the core characteristics of being concealed, progressive, having many complications, and being preventable and treatable. From the perspective of modern medicine, the kidneys have abundant blood flow and are responsible for filtering blood, eliminating toxins, and regulating water and electrolyte balance, but due to their strong compensatory function, patients often do not show obvious symptoms until the middle or late stage. Moreover, most chronic kidney diseases are only diagnosed through laboratory tests in clinical diagnosis, resulting in delayed treatment opportunities. In traditional Chinese medicine, chronic kidney disease is mostly classified under “edema”, “virtual labor”, and “guan gu” categories. The fundamental pathogenesis lies in kidney essence deficiency, spleen-kidney deficiency, or combined with dampness, or blood stasis obstruction [1]. The pathological process often results from long-term effects of factors such as congenital deficiency, overwork, invasion by external pathogens, and improper diet, leading to kidney qi depletion, spleen dysfunction, retention of water and dampness, and over time, the formation of turbid and toxic substances, further depleting the body's vital energy, resulting in complex syndromes with both yin and yang components [2].

1.2 The Theoretical Origin of the Combined Cold and

Warm Prescription Method

The combined cold and warm prescription method can be traced back to the “Nei Jing”. In “Zhi Zhen Yao Da Lun”, it proposed the treatment principles of “cooling when hot, heating when cold” and “if the strange condition does not disappear, then pair it with something else, this is called a compound prescription”, emphasizing the use of drugs with opposite properties to treat different conditions to balance yin and yang [3]. This laid the theoretical foundation for later medical practitioners to adopt the method of combining cold and warm prescriptions when facing complex conditions with cold and heat confusion. Zhang Zhongjing continued this thought in “Shang Han Lun” and dealt with complex conditions with cold and heat confusion and yin-yang intermingled by using the combined cold and warm prescription method, achieving the goal of balancing cold and heat, harmonizing yin and yang, and combining attack and supplementation. For example, the combination of dried ginger, people, and cinnamon in Ban Xia Xie Xin Tang restores the ascending and descending movement of the middle jiao, thereby eliminating 痞 (distension and fullness), stopping vomiting and diarrhea, and is a prescription for treating digestive system cold and heat confusion syndromes; Wugai Pill is a representative prescription for treating cold and heat confusion syndromes in the Shaoyin disease, its intention is to use a large amount of hot drugs to treat the root cause of the lower cold, and a small amount of cold drugs to clear the upper heat, using acid to arrest the urgent symptoms and combining attack and supplementation, treating both the symptoms and the root cause [4]; After a large purge, when yin and yang are both injured and the exterior pathogen has not been resolved, and the internal pathogen has penetrated and turned into heat, Ma Huang Sheng Hua Tang solves the complex situation of upper heat and lower cold, and deficiency of yang qi and entrapment of pathogen [5]. Other prescriptions such as Xia Fu Xie Xin Tang and Zhi Zi Gan

Jiang Tang also have the idea of combined cold and warm prescriptions. Furthermore, in later development, Li Dongwan and Zhu Daxi refined the “Sour Elimination and Bitter Suppression” and “Ascending Yang and Purging Fire” methods, and the fever disease experts flexibly applied the combination of cold and warm medicines at different stages of the Wei Qi Ying Hao (defense, qi, yin, blood) to expand the application scope [5]. Modern pharmacology and chemical research have explored the scientific connotation of cold and hot drug combinations, such as discovering that they may have synergistic effects in anti-inflammation, immune regulation, and protection of the gastrointestinal tract, and have been widely confirmed in clinical practice in traditional Chinese medicine.

2. Theoretical Basis

2.1 Formation Mechanism of Cold and Hot Misalignment Syndromes in Kidney Diseases

The imbalance of yin and yang is the fundamental cause of cold and hot misalignment syndromes. When the balance of yin and yang in the human body is disrupted, such as when yin and yang do not align properly, it will lead to the inability of yang qi to reach the limbs, resulting in the phenomenon of cold and heat coexisting [6]. The syndrome of cold and hot misalignment in kidney diseases is based on spleen-kidney yang deficiency, with damp-heat and stasis as the manifestations, combined with external and internal injuries. Therefore, the onset time is long, and the disease is difficult to heal and improve.

2.2 The Theoretical Foundation of Using Cold and Warm Together in Traditional Chinese Medicine

Firstly: The theory of the opposition and unity of yin and yang. Yin and yang need to mutually support and use each other, and mutually restrain each other. For example, when symptoms such as upper heat and lower cold, surface cold and interior heat, or cold and heat intermingled occur, through the mutual restraint of cold and hot medicines, a dynamic balance can be achieved, and better treatment of the disease can be achieved. Secondly: The disease mechanism of the organs and the interaction of ascending and descending. If the spleen and stomach are simultaneously ill, ginger can be combined with cinnamon to warm the spleen and clear the stomach, forming the “Sour Elimination and Bitter Suppression” method (such as Banxia Xiexin Decoction, etc.). In addition, the combination of cold and warm medicines can regulate qi circulation, such as Gardenia and dried ginger in Gardenia and Dried Ginger Decoction, where Gardenia clears heat and removes restlessness, and dried ginger warms the stomach and stops diarrhea, restoring the ascending and descending of the middle jiao. Thirdly: The concept of “contrary and compatible” in combination. For example, in the Dahuang Fuzi Decoction, the heat of dried ginger restrains the cold of Dahuang, preventing it from harming yang [7]. In Left Golden Pill, Wu Jujube is combined with Cinnamon, which regulates the liver and releases qi, and Cinnamon clears stomach fire, jointly treating vomiting caused by liver fire invading the stomach and toothache caused by stomach fire.

2.3 Special Value of Using Cold and Warm Together in

the Treatment of Kidney Diseases

The method of using cold and warm together is in line with the core pathogenesis of cold and hot misalignment in kidney diseases, as kidney diseases often have a prolonged course and commonly present with spleen-kidney yang deficiency and damp-heat stasis. The main symptoms include coldness, edema, turbid urine, dry mouth and bitter taste, yellow tongue coating, and the interweaving of cold and hot and deficiency and excess. A single warming or purging treatment is difficult to achieve the desired effect. The combination of cold and warm medicines can cope with the evolution of the disease. In addition, the combination of warm and cold medicines can break through the limitations of a single treatment method and precisely address complex clinical symptoms.

3. Clinical Diagnosis and Medication Situation

3.1 Common Main Symptoms and Clinical Symptoms of Cold and Warm Combined Treatment in Kidney Diseases

Firstly, Urinary tract infection, caused by the growth and reproduction of pathogens in the urinary tract, with symptoms such as frequent urination, urgent urination, and painful urination, possibly accompanied by low back pain and fever. In traditional Chinese medicine, it is analyzed as damp-heat combined with spleen-kidney coldness in the lower jiao syndrome. In the acute stage, it is mostly bladder damp-heat, and if the disease does not heal or recurs repeatedly, it will lead to retention of damp-heat, deficiency of yin and qi, or deficiency of spleen and kidney. In the acute stage, the heat is dominant and the cold is weak, and no large amounts of hot medicines are needed. Generally, Eight-Principle Decoction is used to clear heat, eliminate dampness, and promote urination; in the chronic stage or recurrent stage, it can be divided into two situations. When the patient presents with yin deficiency combined with damp-heat, it can be treated with Zhi Bai Di Huang Pill with modifications, where Rehmannia, Coptis, and cooked Rehmannia, Schisandra, and Chinese plum can achieve the effect of nourishing yin, clearing heat, and eliminating dampness. When it is yin deficiency or yang deficiency combined with damp-heat, it can be treated with Shen Ling Bai Zhu San combined with Li Huimeng Yin Decoction, where Codonopsis, Astragalus, Poria, and Job's tears are combined with Cinnamon, Huangbai, etc., to achieve the effect of strengthening the spleen and kidney, and clearing damp heat [8].

Then, Chronic nephritis is a group of diseases originating from the glomerulus, with proteinuria, hematuria, hypertension, and edema as the main clinical manifestations. In traditional Chinese medicine, it is analyzed as water retention due to internal cold combined with damp-heat stasis, with internal cold caused by yin deficiency and damp stagnation leading to heat. Therefore, it is common to present with cold and hot misalignment [9]. When the patient presents with manifestations of spleen-kidney coldness, cinnamon can be combined with Cyathula officinalis and Sophora flower to warm the spleen and promote diuresis. When presenting as qi deficiency or yang deficiency combined with dampness, heat, and blood stasis, the following formulas can be used: Astragalus, Codonopsis, Atractylodes combined with White Flower Snake Weed, Half-Edelweiss, Motherwort combined

with Danshen, Zexian. This is a typical formula that combines cold and warm therapies.

Item three. Chronic renal failure is the outcome of the continuous progression of various chronic kidney diseases. It mainly manifests as renal function decline, retention of metabolic products, etc. In traditional Chinese medicine, it is analyzed as both deficiency of yin and yang, with internal accumulation of turbid toxins. The spleen and kidney decline, and yang deficiency fails to warm and transform, resulting in turbid toxins blocking the triple burner, with a mixture of cold and heat, and internal imbalance of yin and yang [10]. In Wenpi Decoction, dried ginger, dried ginger, and ginseng are combined with rhubarb to achieve the effect of warming yang and eliminating turbid toxins. This is the first formula for treating renal failure with both cold and heat. In the modified Warmth-Relieving Decoction of Huanglian Wenzhe and Su Ye Huanglian Decoction, half-summer, pinellia, poria, and immature bitter orange, caulis bambusae in taeniam, and Huangqin are combined, used to treat symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, and foul-smelling urine due to turbid toxins rising upward. It clears turbid toxins and regulates qi, and harmonizes cold and heat.

3.2 Core Drug Pairs and Precautions

Firstly. Cinnamon combined with Biejie: Warming yang and transforming qi, separating clear from turbid. It can be used for early chronic nephritis with edema [11]; Second, Huanglian combined with Wuju: Clearing heat and drying dampness, warming the stomach and protecting the spleen. Studies have shown that it can be used to treat the syndrome of cold and heat confusion in urinary tract infections; thirdly, Danggui combined with Shaoyao, peach kernel: Nourishing blood and activating blood circulation, clearing heat and cooling blood. It can be used for the later stage of renal fibrosis; fourthly, Motherwort, zexian combined with zexian: Activating blood circulation and promoting collateral flow, resolving nodules, circulating qi. It can also be used to treat renal fibrosis [12].

In clinical treatment, the dosage needs to be dynamically adjusted, and attention should be paid to the patient's constitution and whether they have underlying diseases. At the same time, in the treatment of kidney diseases, it is necessary to seek the root cause, protect kidney qi, and use with caution cold and cool drugs such as Huanglian and Zhi Zi. It is advisable to combine with Cinnamon. Also, it is necessary to protect the spleen and stomach, and use mild and soothing herbs such as Astragalus, Codonopsis, and White Peony.

3.3 Advantages and Precautions of Treating Kidney Diseases with Cold and Warm Therapies

The advantages are harmonizing yin and yang, balancing the main and secondary aspects, and kidney diseases (such as nephrotic syndrome, chronic nephritis) often present as deficiency of yin and yang, with the manifestation of spleen and kidney yang deficiency combined with water-dampness or damp heat. Cold and warm therapies can warm and supplement the yang of the spleen and kidney while clearing heat and eliminating turbid toxins, achieving the effect of

“warming yang without assisting heat, clearing heat without harming yang”. Using traditional Chinese medicine treatment can reduce the side effects of hormones and stabilize the condition. Patients with kidney diseases who have been using hormones for a long time are prone to manifestations of yin deficiency and hyperactivity of fire. Cold and warm therapies can be combined with nourishing yin and lowering fire drugs to alleviate the dry heat nature of hormones, and use warming and kidney-yang-tonifying drugs to enhance the therapeutic effect. For proteinuria, drugs such as Astragalus, mountain root, Biejie, and zexian can be used, while white peony, poria, sophora flower, and safflower can effectively treat hyperlipidemia.

When treating kidney diseases with cold and warm therapies, it is necessary to accurately diagnose the syndrome, avoid overuse, clearly determine the proportion of cold and heat, and if it is mainly cold; it should focus on warming and tonifying, using drugs such as Aconite and Cinnamon; if it is mainly hot, it should strengthen clearing heat, using drugs such as Huangbai and Zhi Zi; if it is a simple deficiency of yang or excessive heat syndrome, cold and warm therapies should not be combined, otherwise it may aggravate the condition. It is also necessary to pay attention to dynamic adjustment of dosage and proportion, when the edema is obvious in the initial stage, warming and diuretic drugs such as Astragalus and Poria can be slightly stronger; when the damp heat has not been cleared in the later stage, reduce warming drugs and increase clearing heat drugs such as Huanglian and Sophora flower. Secondly, it is necessary to remember the contraindications and reduction of toxicity. In addition, during the medication process, it is necessary to pay attention to the combination of diet and care, avoid cold, spicy, and irritating foods during the medication period, limit salt intake for those with edema, and avoid hot pot and animal internal organs for those with high uric acid. The essence of traditional Chinese medicine treatment for kidney diseases lies in “harmonization”, rather than indiscriminate attack. The method of combining cold and warm therapies is an effective means to harmonize yin and yang, heat and cold, and restore the balance of the body.

4. Clinical Application Cases

4.1 A Clinical Medical Case

Patient: Zheng, female, 51 years old, was diagnosed for the first time on October 8, 2024. Chief complaint: intermittent microscopic hematuria for over ten years. Present history: Due to microscopic hematuria, she was hospitalized and treated in our hospital and received outpatient treatment. She has taken Chinese and Western medicines, and the condition has been stable. Recently, after physical exertion, she developed facial edema, accompanied by fatigue. She has good appetite, poor sleep, and normal urination and defecation. The tongue is pale red, with cracks, and the coating is white and thick. The pulse is stringy. Past medical history: The patient's previous physical condition was average. Physical examination: Temperature: 36.7, Pulse: 75 beats per minute, Respiration: 20 breaths per minute, Blood pressure: 121/80 mmHg. Abdomen is soft, no signs of gastrointestinal type or peristaltic waves, abdominal varicose veins, no tenderness in the right upper abdomen (-), no pain in the lower

abdomen (-), no rebound pain or muscle tension, no palpable liver or spleen below the ribs, no abnormalities in both kidneys, no percussion pain in the liver area (-), no mobile dullness in the abdomen (-), normal bowel sounds, no edema in both lower extremities. Neurological examination: Normal physiological reflexes, no pathological reflexes elicited. Auxiliary examination results: 2024-10-08 Urine analysis + urine sediment quantification: Urine occult blood (HR) positive (2+)↑, Urine red blood cell quantification 44.30↑/ul, Mucus filament positive (+)↑. Traditional Chinese medicine diagnosis: Urinary turbidity: Spleen and kidney deficiency syndrome. Treatment with Qigedi Gushen Capsules 5 bottles, 1.6g per day, taken orally three times a day. The patient did not return for follow-up visits after this. Second visit: 2025-03-18, the patient's condition relapsed, with swollen hands, slight facial edema, poor sleep, no other obvious abnormalities. Auxiliary examination: 2024-10-08 Urine analysis + urine sediment quantification: Urine occult blood (HR) positive (2+)↑, Urine red blood cell quantification 44.30↑/ul, Mucus filament positive (+)↑; 2024-12-17 Urine analysis + urine sediment quantification: Urine occult blood (HR) positive (+)↑. The patient was diagnosed with urinary turbidity: Spleen and kidney deficiency syndrome by traditional Chinese medicine.

Diagnosis and treatment suggestions:

Shredded apricot kernels 10g Angelica sinensis 10g cassia twig 15g Poria cocos 10g Salted Alisma 10g Fermented white atractylodes 15g Water hyacinth 30g Plantago asiatica 30g Chinese radix Achyranthes bidentata 30g Cyperus rotundus 15g Rehmannia glutinosa 10g Safflower 10g Dandelion root 30g Fried licorice 10g Chuanxiong 10g

12 prescriptions of Chinese medicine, one dose per day, decocted in 300ml of water, taken warm in the morning and evening, taken orally.

The main treatment of Chinese medicine is to strengthen the spleen and kidney, activate blood circulation and dampness elimination, cool blood and stop bleeding. Among them, white atractylodes, poria cocos, alisma, plantago asiatica, and cyperus rotundus are used to strengthen the spleen and eliminate dampness, rehmannia glutinosa, Chinese radix Achyranthes bidentata are used to nourish the kidney and consolidate the foundation, apricot kernels, angelica sinensis, chuanxiong, guizhi, and peony bark are used to activate blood circulation and resolve stasis. Dandelion root cools blood and stops bleeding, water hyacinth eliminates fluid and reduces swelling, fried licorice is used to harmonize the properties of the medicine. The combination of guizhi and peony bark: follows the intention of Gui Zhi Fuling Pill, warming and promoting blood circulation while clearing heat and cooling blood, preventing warmth and heat from increasing. Rehmannia glutinosa and alisma are combined: follows the thinking of "three supplements and three purges" in the Six-Ingredient Rehmannia Pill, nourishing the kidney and consolidating the foundation without being greasy, eliminating turbidity and clearing heat without harming the body [13]. Angelica sinensis, chuanxiong, dandelion root, peony bark: both treat the root cause by resolving stasis and promoting circulation, and treat the symptoms by cooling blood and stopping bleeding, suitable for complex

pathological mechanisms of blood stasis and blood heat (such as recurrent hematuria). Atractylodes, Poria cocos and Alisma, and Plantago asiatica: A combination of tonification and depletion, restoring the digestive function of the spleen and eliminating the source of dampness and turbidity. This prescription uses both cold and warm therapies, benefiting both the spleen and kidney deficiencies, clearing dampness and heat, cooling blood and resolving stasis, embodying the diagnostic thinking of "mutual dependence of yin and yang" and "treating the symptoms and root causes together" in traditional Chinese medicine.

During the treatment process of this patient, focusing on the core pathological mechanism of "deficiency of spleen and kidney", while taking into account the "interference of dampness and stasis", the treatment mainly relied on tonifying the spleen and kidney, supplemented with promoting blood circulation and eliminating dampness. In addition, it is recommended that the patient complete relevant examinations (such as renal function, 24-hour urine protein quantification, urinary system ultrasound, and when necessary, renal biopsy), monitor the progress of the disease, and avoid overexertion.

4.2 Efficacy Evaluation

After a series of traditional Chinese medicine treatments, the patient's condition of urine occult blood has significantly improved. The patient feels comfortable physically, and the facial swelling has significantly reduced compared to before. Now, the patient can perform basic physical labor and no obvious discomfort has been found.

5. Discussion and Outlook

5.1 Support from Modern Pharmacology Research

5.1.1 Regulation of Central Nervous System Neurotransmitters and Sympathetic Nervous System

Cold-natured drugs (such as Eucommia ulmoides and Gypsum fibrosum) often have the effect of inhibiting the excitability of the sympathetic nerve, which can reduce the metabolic rate and decrease inflammatory responses; while hot-natured drugs (such as Aconitum carmichaelii and Cinnamomum cassia) can activate the sympathetic nerve-adrenal medulla system, promoting energy metabolism and blood circulation. This bidirectional regulatory effect helps to improve the immune disorder and energy metabolism imbalance in patients with kidney diseases, especially the common endocrine disorders and autonomic nerve dysfunction in chronic kidney disease (CKD).

5.1.2 Immunomodulation and Anti-inflammatory Effects

The combination of cold and hot prescriptions (such as the Clear Heat and Strengthen Kidney Decoction combined with warming Yang drugs) in the clinical research of Henoch-Schönlein purpura nephritis shows that it can significantly reduce the total 24-hour urine protein, and its mechanism may be related to the inhibition of excessive immune response (such as Th1/Th2 imbalance) and the reduction of glomerular inflammatory damage [14]. For example, cold-natured drugs such as Baihua Shitengcao and

Banxia Huayin have anti-inflammatory and immunosuppressive effects, while hot-natured drugs such as Astragalus membranaceus and Epimedium can enhance immune function, and the combination of these two forms forms a bidirectional regulation.

5.1.3Improvement of Renal Microcirculation and Antioxidation

Warm-natured drugs (such as Chuanxiong and Danggui) can dilate renal vessels and improve hemodynamics; cold-natured drugs (such as Shengdiulan and Huaihua) can reduce renal tubular interstitial fibrosis through antioxidation and free radical clearance. Professor Liu Baohou's theory of "Blood stasis not eliminated, kidney qi cannot be restored" is supported by hemorheological studies, and the combination of cold and hot can improve the hypercoagulable state of patients with kidney diseases [15].

5.1.4Regulation of Energy Metabolism and Mitochondrial Function

Cold-natured drugs inhibit excessive ATP consumption (such as berberine through the AMPK pathway), while hot-natured drugs (such as aconitine in Aconitum) can enhance the low mitochondrial function. The two work together to correct the energy metabolism disorder in kidney diseases.

5.1.5Anti-infection and Reduction of Proteinuria

Damp heat is the key factor for the persistence of proteinuria in kidney diseases. The combination of cold and hot prescriptions (such as Jingfang Renyan Baiudu Decoction) combines clearing heat and detoxification (such as Banxia Huayin) with warming and eliminating dampness (such as Fuling) to effectively control latent infections and reduce proteinuria [16]. Modern research has confirmed that damp heat syndrome is closely related to infection, and drugs that clear and eliminate damp heat (such as Baihua Shitengcao) have broad-spectrum antibacterial and immunomodulatory effects.

6. Conclusion

The modern mechanism of using cold and hot drugs to treat kidney diseases involves multi-target regulation, including the neuro-endocrine-immune network,energy metabolism, microcirculation,and antioxidation. This combination strategy not only conforms to the theory of "balance of yin and yang" in traditional Chinese medicine, but also has been confirmed by pharmacological research to have unique advantages in improving renal fibrosis, reducing proteinuria, and delaying the deterioration of renal function.It provides a more comprehensive and flexible treatment approach for kidney disease, improving clinical treatment effects, improving the quality of life of patients, delaying the progression of kidney disease, and reducing the incidence of serious complications such as uremia. The application of the cold-heat combination method in the treatment of kidney diseases enriches and develops the theory and treatment methods of traditional Chinese medicine for kidney diseases, provides new methods and bases for traditional Chinese medicine treatment of kidney diseases, promotes the development of the discipline

of traditional Chinese medicine for kidney diseases, and expands the advantages of traditional Chinese medicine in the treatment of kidney diseases: This method embodies the characteristics of the overall concept and syndrome differentiation and treatment in traditional Chinese medicine, helps to exert the advantages of traditional Chinese medicine in the treatment of kidney diseases, enhances the influence of traditional Chinese medicine in the field of kidney disease treatment, and benefits more kidney disease patients from traditional Chinese medicine treatment.

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