



# Effect of SGLT2 Inhibitors on Stroke and Atrial Fibrillation in Diabetic Kidney Disease

## Results From the CREDENCE Trial and Meta-Analysis

Zien Zhou<sup>1</sup>, MD; Meg J. Jardine, MBBS, PhD; Qiang Li, MBIostat; Brendon L. Neuen<sup>2</sup>, MBBS (Hons), MSc; Christopher P. Cannon, MD; Dick de Zeeuw, MD, PhD; Robert Edwards, MPH; Adeera Levin, MD, FRCPC; Kenneth W. Mahaffey, MD; Vlado Perkovic, MBBS, PhD; Bruce Neal<sup>3</sup>, MB ChB, PhD; Richard I. Lindley<sup>4</sup>, MD; CREDENCE Trial Investigators\*

**BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE:** Chronic kidney disease with reduced estimated glomerular filtration rate or elevated albuminuria increases risk for ischemic and hemorrhagic stroke. This study assessed the effects of sodium glucose cotransporter 2 inhibitors (SGLT2i) on stroke and atrial fibrillation/flutter (AF/AFL) from CREDENCE (Canagliflozin and Renal Events in Diabetes With Established Nephropathy Clinical Evaluation) and a meta-analysis of large cardiovascular outcome trials (CVOTs) of SGLT2i in type 2 diabetes mellitus.

**METHODS:** CREDENCE randomized 4401 participants with type 2 diabetes mellitus and chronic kidney disease to canagliflozin or placebo. Post hoc, we estimated effects on fatal or nonfatal stroke, stroke subtypes, and intermediate markers of stroke risk including AF/AFL. Stroke and AF/AFL data from 3 other completed large CVOTs and CREDENCE were pooled using random-effects meta-analysis.

**RESULTS:** In CREDENCE, 142 participants experienced a stroke during follow-up (10.9/1000 patient-years with canagliflozin, 14.2/1000 patient-years with placebo; hazard ratio [HR], 0.77 [95% CI, 0.55–1.08]). Effects by stroke subtypes were: ischemic (HR, 0.88 [95% CI, 0.61–1.28]; n=111), hemorrhagic (HR, 0.50 [95% CI, 0.19–1.32]; n=18), and undetermined (HR, 0.54 [95% CI, 0.20–1.46]; n=17). There was no clear effect on AF/AFL (HR, 0.76 [95% CI, 0.53–1.10]; n=115). The overall effects in the 4 CVOTs combined were: total stroke (HR<sub>pooled</sub>, 0.96 [95% CI, 0.82–1.12]), ischemic stroke (HR<sub>pooled</sub>, 1.01 [95% CI, 0.89–1.14]), hemorrhagic stroke (HR<sub>pooled</sub>, 0.50 [95% CI, 0.30–0.83]), undetermined stroke (HR<sub>pooled</sub>, 0.86 [95% CI, 0.49–1.51]), and AF/AFL (HR<sub>pooled</sub>, 0.81 [95% CI, 0.71–0.93]). There was evidence that SGLT2i effects on total stroke varied by baseline estimated glomerular filtration rate ( $P=0.01$ ), with protection in the lowest estimated glomerular filtration rate (<45 mL/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup>) subgroup (HR<sub>pooled</sub>, 0.50 [95% CI, 0.31–0.79]).

**CONCLUSIONS:** Although we found no clear effect of SGLT2i on total stroke in CREDENCE or across trials combined, there was some evidence of benefit in preventing hemorrhagic stroke and AF/AFL, as well as total stroke for those with lowest estimated glomerular filtration rate. Future research should focus on confirming these data and exploring potential mechanisms.

**REGISTRATION:** URL: <https://www.clinicaltrials.gov>; Unique identifier: NCT02065791.

**Key Words:** atrial fibrillation ■ canagliflozin ■ glomerular filtration rate ■ hemorrhagic stroke ■ ischemic stroke

Correspondence to: Richard I. Lindley, MD, The George Institute for Global Health, Level 5, 1 King St, Newtown NSW 2042 Australia. Email [rlindley@georgeinstitute.org.au](mailto:rlindley@georgeinstitute.org.au)

\*A list of all CREDENCE Trial Investigators is given in the Appendix.

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## Nonstandard Abbreviations and Acronyms

<b>AF</b>	atrial fibrillation
<b>AFL</b>	atrial flutter
<b>CKD</b>	chronic kidney disease
<b>CREDESCENCE</b>	Canagliflozin and Renal Events in Diabetes With Established Nephropathy Clinical Evaluation
<b>CVOT</b>	cardiovascular outcome trial
<b>DAPA-HF</b>	Dapagliflozin and Prevention of Adverse Outcomes in Heart Failure
<b>DECLARE-TIMI-58</b>	Dapagliflozin Effect on Cardiovascular Events—Thrombolysis in Myocardial Infarction 58
<b>eGFR</b>	estimated glomerular filtration rate
<b>EMPA-REG OUTCOME</b>	Empagliflozin Cardiovascular Outcome Event Trial in Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus Patients
<b>HbA1c</b>	glycated hemoglobin
<b>HDL-C</b>	high-density lipoprotein cholesterol
<b>HR</b>	hazard ratio
<b>LDL-C</b>	low-density lipoprotein cholesterol
<b>SGLT2i</b>	sodium glucose cotransporter 2 inhibitor
<b>T2DM</b>	type 2 diabetes mellitus
<b>UACR</b>	urinary albumin:creatinine ratio

Chronic kidney disease (CKD) with reduced estimated glomerular filtration rate (eGFR) or elevated albuminuria is a risk factor for ischemic and hemorrhagic stroke.<sup>1,2</sup> Although the pathogenesis of stroke in patients with CKD has been widely investigated, stroke prevention in CKD remains an important problem due to the lack of effective interventions and specific guideline recommendations.<sup>3–5</sup> Sodium glucose cotransporter 2 inhibitors (SGLT2i) were developed as a new treatment for type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM) with a pharmacologic mechanism based upon inhibition of sodium and glucose reuptake in the proximal tubule resulting in enhanced glycosuria and natriuresis. A clear protective benefit of SGLT2i on cardiovascular events and kidney failure has now been defined in several large trials.<sup>6–11</sup> In a post hoc analysis from the CANVAS Program (Canagliflozin Cardiovascular Assessment Study), there was heterogeneity of the treatment effect on stroke by baseline eGFR, and a significant lowering in stroke risk was observed in participants with impaired kidney function.<sup>12,13</sup> Although it was not statistically significant in the EMPA-REG OUTCOME trial (Empagliflozin Cardiovascular Outcome Event Trial in Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus Patients),<sup>14,15</sup> a similar pattern of the effect of empagliflozin on stroke by baseline kidney function was observed, raising the possibility that the effect of SGLT2i on stroke may vary according to kidney function.

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In these analyses, we explored the effects of canagliflozin on stroke, stroke subtypes, and intermediate markers of stroke risk, including atrial fibrillation (AF) and atrial flutter (AFL), in participants with diabetic kidney disease from the CREDESCENCE trial (Canagliflozin and Renal Events in Diabetes With Established Nephropathy Clinical Evaluation). Additionally, we meta-analyzed stroke outcomes from all large-scale, randomized, placebo-controlled, cardiovascular outcome trials (CVOTs) of SGLT2i in T2DM, given that no single trial was specifically designed and powered to detect treatment effects on stroke.

## METHODS

### Data Availability

Data from the CREDESCENCE trial will be made available in the public domain via the Yale University Open Data Access Project (<http://yoda.yale.edu/>) once the product and relevant indication studied have been approved by regulators in the United States and European Union and the study has been completed for 18 months.

### Program Design

The study design, participant characteristics, and main results of CREDESCENCE have been published.<sup>9,16</sup> In brief, CREDESCENCE was a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, multicenter (690 centers in 34 countries) clinical trial that assessed the effect of canagliflozin on clinically important renal, cardiovascular, and safety outcomes in people with T2DM and CKD on background standard of care. The trial was closed early following a planned interim analysis that demonstrated clear evidence of benefit, and the final patient follow-up was performed in October 2018, with the database locked in November 2018.<sup>9</sup>

### Participants

Participants in CREDESCENCE were those with glycated hemoglobin (HbA1c) 6.5% to 12.0%, ≥30 years of age, eGFR 30 to <90 mL/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup> urinary albumin:creatinine ratio (UACR) >300 to 5000 mg/g, and being treated with a stable maximum labeled or tolerated dose of an angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitor or angiotensin receptor blocker for ≥4 weeks before randomization. By design, ≈60% of participants had a screening eGFR of 30–<60 mL/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup>. Key exclusion criteria were nondiabetic kidney disease, type 1 diabetes, and prior treatment of kidney disease with immunosuppression or a history of renal replacement therapy.

### Randomization, Treatment, and Follow-Up

After a 2- to 10-week screening period (including a 2-week, single-blind, placebo run-in period), participants were randomly assigned in a 1:1 ratio to oral canagliflozin 100 mg daily or

matching placebo. Randomization utilized permuted blocks with stratification by eGFR categories (30–<45, 45–<60, and 60–<90 mL/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup>). Participants and all study staff were masked to individual treatment allocations until the completion of the study. The protocol stipulated that study treatment be continued until the commencement of dialysis, receipt of a kidney transplant, occurrence of diabetic ketoacidosis, pregnancy, receipt of disallowed therapy, or study conclusion. Use of other background therapy for glycemic management, prevention of stroke, and other renal or cardiovascular end points was according to best practice and local guidelines.

After randomization, face-to-face follow-up visits were scheduled at 3, 13, and 26 weeks, followed by alternating telephone contacts and face-to-face visits at 3-month intervals thereafter. An additional telephone visit was arranged 30 days after study drug discontinuation. Every follow-up included inquiry about primary and secondary outcome events and serious adverse events. Participants who prematurely discontinued study treatment continued scheduled follow-up wherever possible, with extensive efforts made to obtain full outcome data.

## Outcomes

The primary outcome for these analyses was fatal or nonfatal stroke combined. Secondary outcomes included fatal stroke, nonfatal stroke, and different stroke subtypes (ischemic, hemorrhagic, or undetermined). An Endpoint Adjudication Committee adjudicated all renal and cardiovascular outcomes in CREDENCE, with stroke events adjudicated by experienced stroke physicians ([Data Supplement](#)). Stroke was defined using the 2013 American Heart Association/American Stroke Association criteria.<sup>17</sup> Ischemic and hemorrhagic stroke were determined from the neuroimaging findings, whereas undetermined stroke represented a clinical stroke without confirmation of pathologic stroke type. Possible intermediate markers of stroke risk were analyzed, including systolic blood pressure, diastolic blood pressure, body weight, HbA1c, cholesterol, triglycerides, hematocrit, UACR, eGFR, and site-reported adverse events related to AF or AFL, which were identified in the trial database of adverse events using the Medical Dictionary of Regulatory Affairs preferred terms of “atrial fibrillation” or “atrial flutter.”

## Statistical Analysis for CREDENCE

We used the full dataset with an intention-to-treat approach to compare all participants assigned to canagliflozin with those assigned to placebo. Analyses were based on the occurrence of the first event under investigation for dichotomous outcomes. Annualized incidence rates (participants with an event per 1000 patient-years of follow-up) were calculated in addition to hazard ratios (HRs) and 95% CIs determined from Cox regression models, with treatment as the explanatory variable and stratification according to screening eGFR strata. Cumulative event curves were plotted to show the evolution of stroke risk over time. We tested the homogeneity of treatment effects across subgroups defined by screening eGFR strata, baseline UACR levels (>1000 or ≤1000 mg/g), and other baseline participant characteristics after including interaction terms. Effects of canagliflozin on continuous intermediate markers of stroke

risk were analyzed using the mixed-effects model for repeated measures in the on-treatment participants (unless otherwise noted), with an unstructured covariance and adjusting for the baseline value, treatment, screening eGFR strata, and trial visit.

## Meta-Analysis

To explore our results in the context of the totality of the available evidence, we performed an updated meta-analysis. We followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systemic Reviews and Meta-Analyses statement<sup>18</sup> except for protocol registration. Our recent systematic review and meta-analysis on the effects of SGLT2i on cardiovascular events in patients with T2DM<sup>10</sup> identified 4 eligible trials: EMPA-REG OUTCOME, DECLARE-TIMI-58 (Dapagliflozin Effect on Cardiovascular Events–Thrombolysis in Myocardial Infarction 58), the CANVAS Program, and CREDENCE. We updated the literature search in Medline and Embase (from January 2019 to April 2020) and assessed the eligibility using the same search strategy, study selection criteria, and method for risk of bias assessment. Study-level data on total stroke, nonfatal stroke, fatal stroke, stroke subtypes, and AF or AFL were extracted from eligible trials and pooled. Summary HRs with 95% CIs were obtained using the DerSimonian and Laird random-effects model.<sup>19</sup> The percentage of variability across the pooled estimates attributable to heterogeneity beyond chance was estimated using the I<sup>2</sup> statistic, with I<sup>2</sup> values of 25%, 50%, and 75% being regarded as low, moderate, and high heterogeneity, respectively. We also explored the pooled treatment effects on total stroke and ischemic stroke by baseline eGFR of ≥90, 60 to <90, 45 to <60, and <45 mL/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup> and on hemorrhagic stroke by baseline eGFR of ≥60, and <60 mL/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup>. Random-effects meta-regression was performed to test linear trend across ordered eGFR categories. SAS Enterprise Guide version 7.1 and Stata version 12.0 were used.

## Standard Protocol Approvals, Registrations, and Patient Consents

The protocol for CREDENCE was approved by the ethics committees at each site. All participants provided written informed consent.

## RESULTS

### Baseline Characteristics of CREDENCE

In CREDENCE, 4401 participants were followed for a median follow-up of 2.6 years (Figure 1 in the [Data Supplement](#)). Mean age was 63 years, 34% were women, mean duration of diabetes was 15.8 years, 50% had a history of cardiovascular disease, and 16% had prior stroke. Mean baseline values were HbA1c 8.3%, systolic blood pressure 140 mmHg, diastolic blood pressure 78 mmHg, and eGFR 56.2 mL/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup>. Median baseline UACR was 927 mg/g. There were 142 (3.2%) individuals who experienced 157 stroke events during follow-up (129 had 1 event, 11 had 2 events, and 2 had 3 events). Participants with stroke during follow-up, versus nonstroke participants, had higher classical stroke

risk factors of baseline HbA1c levels, prior hypertension, AF or AFL, retinopathy, and cardiovascular or atherosclerotic vascular disease. They were also more likely to take a beta-blocker or antithrombotic drug at baseline (Table I in the [Data Supplement](#)).

## Effects of Canagliflozin on Stroke in CREDESCENCE

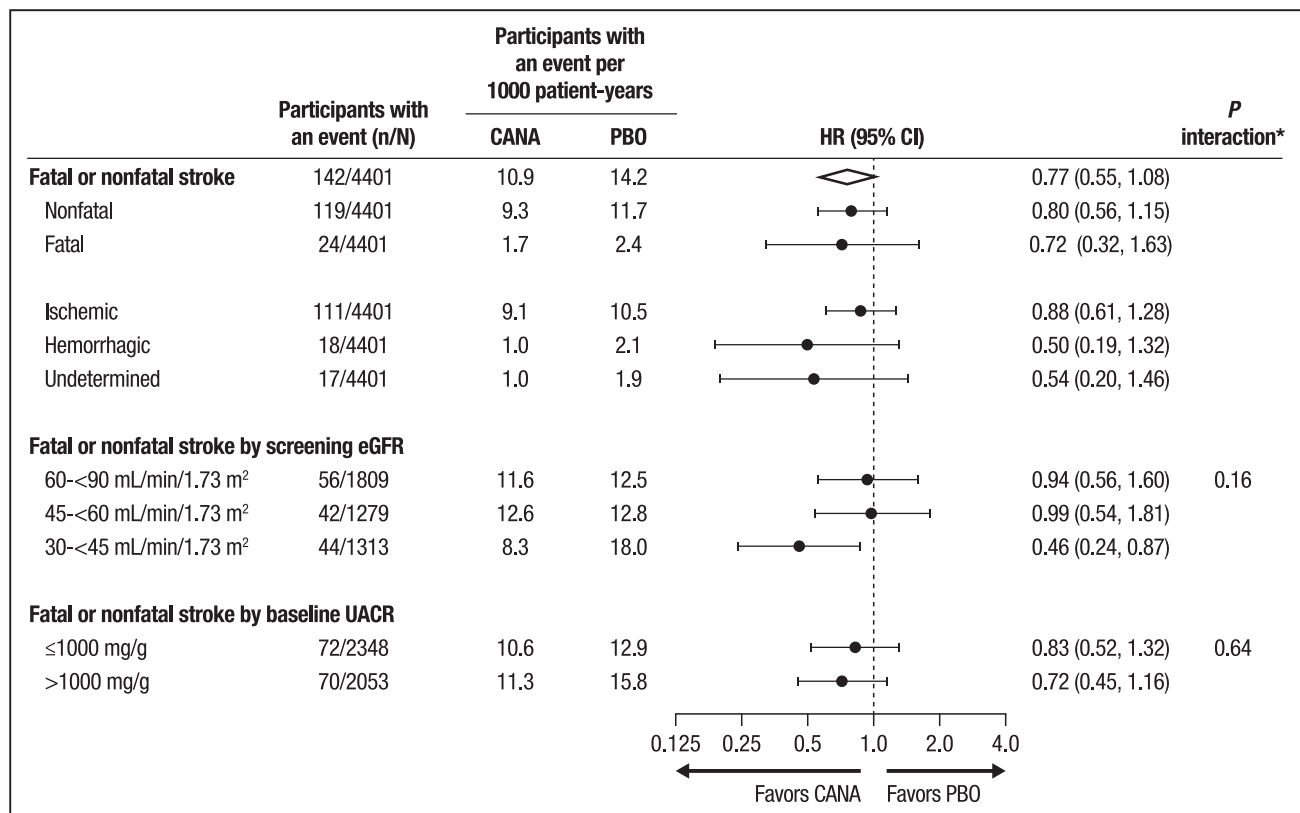
Participants receiving canagliflozin versus placebo had fewer, but nonsignificant, fatal, or nonfatal strokes during follow-up (10.9/1000 patient-years versus 14.2/1000 patient-years) with a corresponding HR of 0.77 (95% CI, 0.55–1.08; Figure 1 and Figure II in the [Data Supplement](#)). Most stroke events were nonfatal (119 participants) and ischemic (111 participants). Point estimates of effect were consistently below unity for nonfatal stroke (n=119; HR, 0.80 [95% CI, 0.56–1.15]), fatal stroke (n=24; HR, 0.72 [95% CI, 0.32–1.63]), ischemic stroke (n=111; HR, 0.88 [95% CI, 0.61–1.28]), hemorrhagic stroke (n=18; HR, 0.50 [95% CI, 0.19–1.32]), and undetermined stroke (n=17; HR, 0.54 [95% CI, 0.20–1.46]), but none of these individual results were statistically significant. Effects of treatment on fatal or nonfatal stroke were similar across screening eGFR strata ( $P$  interaction=0.16)

and baseline UACR of >1000 versus ≤1000 mg/g ( $P$  interaction=0.64; Figure 1). There was also no evidence of heterogeneity of treatment effects for other participant subgroups (all  $P$  interaction >0.31; Figure III in the [Data Supplement](#)).

## Effects on Possible Intermediate Markers of Stroke Risk in CREDESCENCE

There were favorable effects of canagliflozin on systolic blood pressure, diastolic blood pressure, body weight, HbA1c, high-density lipoprotein cholesterol (HDL-C), UACR, and eGFR (Table). Small increases were observed for hematocrit and total cholesterol with null effects on low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL-C), triglycerides, and the ratio of LDL-C to HDL-C.

During the trial, 127 AF and 12 AFL adverse events in 115 participants were reported by site investigators. There was no clear effect of canagliflozin on the incidence of AF or AFL (n=115; HR, 0.76 [95% CI, 0.53–1.10];  $P=0.15$ ). Effects were consistent across screening eGFR strata ( $P$  interaction=0.94) or baseline UACR levels ( $P$  interaction=0.99), but there was evidence of differential effects across the subsets of participants with and without history of AF or AFL at baseline ( $P$  interaction=0.02; Figure 2).



**Figure 1. Effects of canagliflozin on stroke in CREDESCENCE (Canagliflozin and Renal Events in Diabetes With Established Nephropathy Clinical Evaluation).**

CANA indicates canagliflozin; eGFR, estimated glomerular filtration rate; HR, hazard ratio; PBO, placebo; and UACR, urinary albumin:creatinine ratio. \* $P$  value for interaction across subgroups.

**Table. Effects of Canagliflozin on Possible Intermediate Markers of Stroke Risk**

	Least-squares mean change ( $\pm$ SE) over 182 wk after randomization*		Mean or relative treatment difference* (95% CI)
	CANA	PBO	
SBP, mm Hg	-2.82 (0.22)	0.48 (0.23)	-3.30 (-3.87 to -2.73)
DBP, mm Hg	-1.37 (0.13)	-0.42 (0.13)	-0.95 (-1.28 to -0.61)
Body weight, kg	-1.13 (0.07)	-0.33 (0.07)	-0.80 (-0.92 to -0.69)
HbA1c, %	-0.42 (0.02)	-0.16 (0.02)	-0.25 (-0.31 to -0.20)
HDL cholesterol, mmol/L	0.01 (<0.01)	-0.01 (<0.01)	0.02 (0.01 to 0.03)
LDL cholesterol, mmol/L	0.05 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	0.04 (-0.01 to 0.09)
Ratio of LDL to HDL, %	2.58 (1.82)	3.55 (1.86)	-0.97 (-5.82 to 3.89)
Triglycerides, mmol/L	0.11 (0.03)	0.10 (0.03)	0.01 (-0.07 to 0.09)
Total cholesterol, mmol/L	0.12 (0.02)	0.05 (0.02)	0.07 (0.01 to 0.13)
Hematocrit, %	1.61 (0.08)	-0.92 (0.08)	2.52 (2.32 to 2.73)
Geometric UACR,† mg/g	541.58 (1.02)‡	781.07 (1.02)‡	-31% (-35% to -26%)§
eGFR slope,   mL/min/1.73 m <sup>2</sup> /y	-3.19 (0.15)	-4.71 (0.15)	1.52 (1.11 to 1.93)

CANA indicates canagliflozin; DBP, diastolic blood pressure; eGFR, estimated glomerular filtration rate; HbA1c, glycated hemoglobin; HDL, high-density lipoprotein; LDL, low-density lipoprotein; PBO, placebo; SBP, systolic blood pressure; and UACR, urinary albumin:creatinine ratio.

\*Analyzed in the on-treatment participants with both baseline and  $\geq 1$  postbaseline measurement using the mixed-effects model for repeated measures, with an unstructured covariance and adjusting for the baseline value, trial group, category of screening eGFR, and trial visit (except geometric UACR and eGFR slope).

†Analyzed in the intention-to-treat participants with log-transformed UACR.

‡Geometric mean ( $\pm$ SE) estimation using the mixed-effects model for repeated measures, with an unstructured covariance and adjusting for logarithm of baseline value, trial group, and trial visit.

§Percentage reduction of the geometric mean of UACR in CANA relative to PBO.

||The mean eGFR slope at wk 130 after randomization was calculated as a weighted combination of the 2-slope model with a knot at wk 3 (acute slope from baseline to wk 3, chronic slope from wk 3 to end of treatment), including the fixed effects of trial group, baseline eGFR, category of screening eGFR, continuous time, and time spline (1 knot at wk 3), with 2-way interactions of trial group by time; trial group by time spline; category of screening eGFR by time; category of screening eGFR by time spline; and the random effects of intercept, time, and time spline.

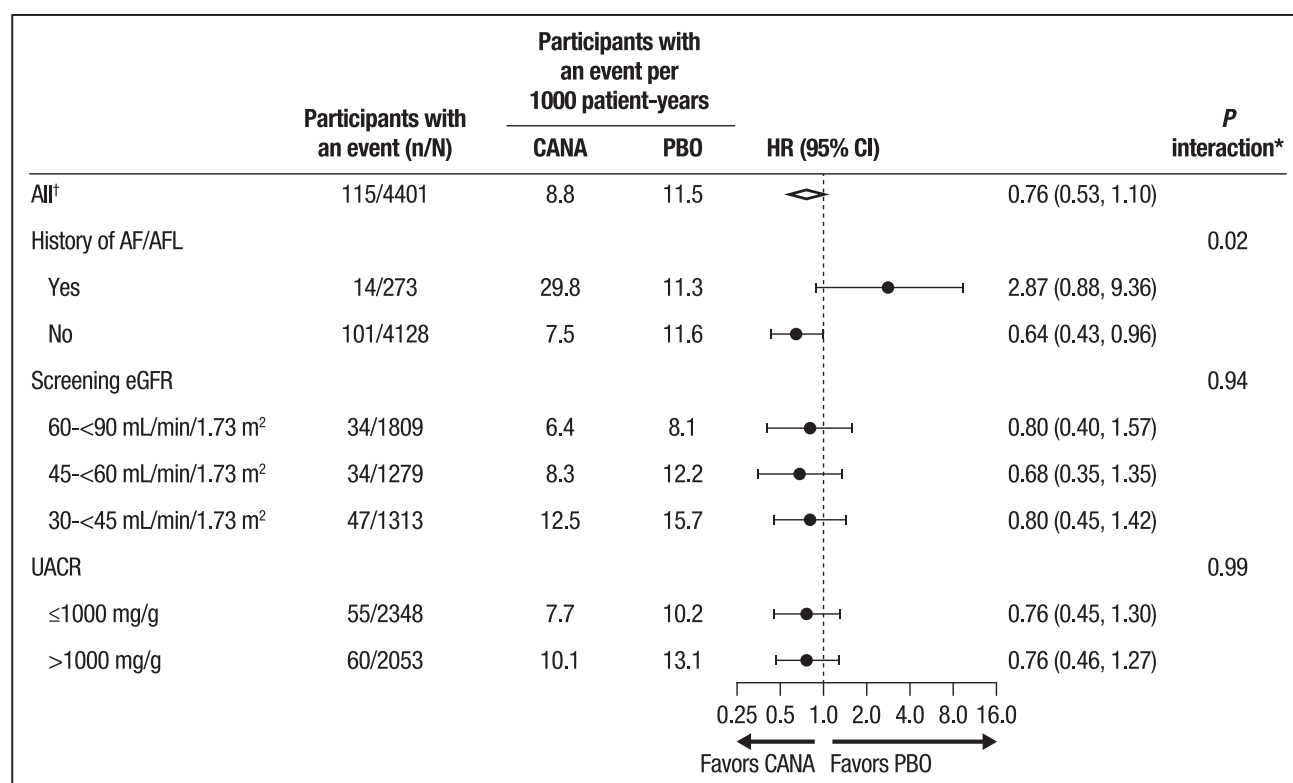
## Meta-Analysis of SGLT2i Effects

The update of the literature search yielded 343 potentially eligible articles or conference abstracts, of which 26 articles were reviewed in full. One more trial (DAPA-HF [Dapagliflozin and Prevention of Adverse Outcomes in Heart Failure]<sup>20</sup>) was identified but was excluded due to lack of stroke outcome data. A total of 38 723 patients with T2DM from the 4 included trials (7020 in EMPA-REG OUTCOME, 17 160 in DECLARE-TIMI-58, 10 142 in the CANVAS Program, and 4401 in CREDENCE) were randomized to treatment with SGLT2i or placebo, with a median follow-up of 2.4 (CANVAS Program) to 4.2 years (DECLARE-TIMI-58). Among these, 1150 (3.0%) participants (233 [3.3%] in EMPA-REG OUTCOME, 466 [2.7%] in DECLARE-TIMI-58, 309 [3.0%] in the CANVAS Program, and 142 [3.2%] in CREDENCE) had a stroke event during the trial with an overall null effect of SGLT2i on total stroke (HR<sub>pooled</sub> 0.96 [95% CI, 0.82–1.12]; I<sup>2</sup>=36.5%), nonfatal stroke (HR<sub>pooled</sub> 0.97 [95% CI, 0.76–1.24]; I<sup>2</sup>=51.0%), fatal stroke (HR<sub>pooled</sub> 0.77 [95% CI, 0.50–1.17]; I<sup>2</sup>=0.0%), ischemic stroke (HR<sub>pooled</sub> 1.01 [95% CI, 0.89–1.14]; I<sup>2</sup>=0.0%), and undetermined stroke (HR<sub>pooled</sub> 0.86 [95% CI, 0.49–1.51]; I<sup>2</sup>=0.0%; Figure 3). A beneficial effect on hemorrhagic stroke was seen after pooling (HR<sub>pooled</sub> 0.50 [95% CI, 0.30–0.83];

I<sup>2</sup>=0.0%). There was significant heterogeneity of treatment effects on total stroke by baseline kidney function (P=0.01), with a pattern of protection among those with eGFR <45 mL/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup> (HR<sub>pooled</sub> 0.50 [95% CI, 0.31–0.79]; I<sup>2</sup>=0.0%) but not in those with higher eGFR (Figure 4). Differential treatment effects across baseline eGFR levels were not identified on either ischemic stroke (P=0.07) or hemorrhagic stroke (P=0.23) alone after pooling related data from the DECLARE-TIMI-58, CANVAS Program, and CREDENCE (Figures IV and V in the [Data Supplement](#)). AF or AFL data from DECLARE-TIMI-58, CANVAS Program, and CREDENCE were pooled with an overall beneficial effects of SGLT2i on AF or AFL (HR<sub>pooled</sub> 0.81 [95% CI, 0.71–0.93]; I<sup>2</sup>=0.0%; Figure VI in the [Data Supplement](#)).

## DISCUSSION

Neither the CREDENCE trial nor the meta-analysis of the 4 existing studies provided definite evidence that SGLT2i results in stroke prevention. Meta-analysis indicated a possibility that SGLT2i reduced the risk of hemorrhagic stroke and AF. There was some evidence that the effects of SGLT2i on stroke may vary by baseline kidney function with a possible benefit in those with



**Figure 2. Effects of canagliflozin on the incidence of atrial fibrillation (AF) or atrial flutter (AFL) in CREDENCE (Canagliflozin and Renal Events in Diabetes With Established Nephropathy Clinical Evaluation).**

CANA indicates canagliflozin; eGFR, estimated glomerular filtration rate; HR, hazard ratio; PBO, placebo; and UACR, urinary albumin:creatinine ratio. \**P* value for interaction across subgroups. †Events of AF or AFL were identified from site investigator–reported adverse events.

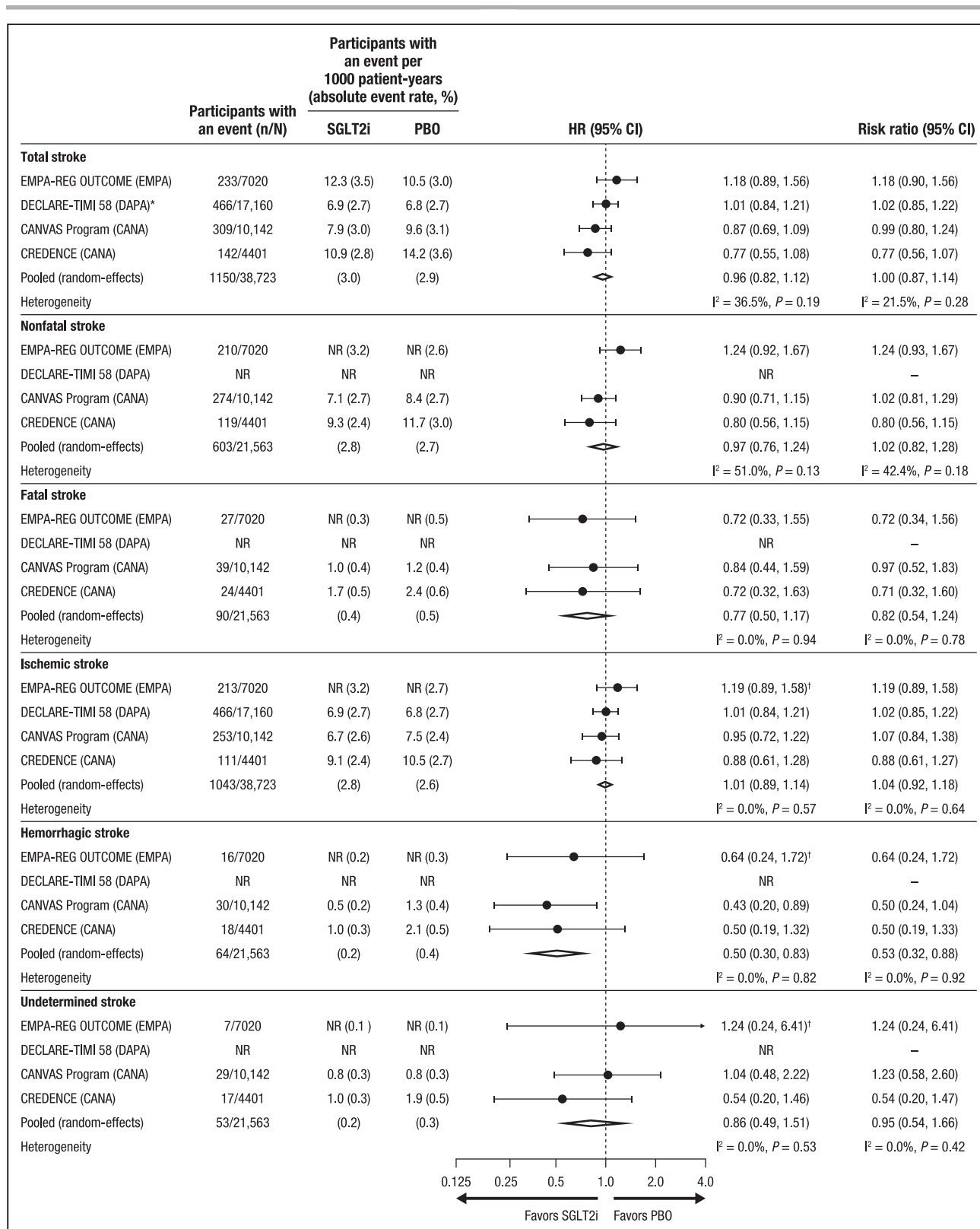
significantly reduced eGFR. Data from ongoing trials in general patients with T2DM or in those with CKD should help to answer this question.

Strokes are more common in patients with CKD compared with the general population. Although stroke and CKD share common risk factors (aging, diabetes, hypertension, dyslipidemia, obesity, and smoking), CKD (defined as eGFR <60 mL/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup>) is an independent risk factor for stroke.<sup>21</sup> Causes include increased blood viscosity and arterial wall stiffness mediated by multiple mechanisms (rennin-angiotensin-aldosterone system activation, platelet dysfunction, oxidative stress, inflammation, etc) and a high prevalence of AF (around 1 in 5 not receiving dialysis and 1 in 3 receiving dialysis).<sup>22</sup> Additionally, there is substantial uncertainty about the relative benefits and harms of anticoagulation in this group of patients.<sup>22,23</sup> Although SGLT2i are not thought to have a direct effect on arrhythmias, their protection against heart failure and a possible benefit in myocardial dysfunction<sup>24,25</sup> may indirectly reduce the risk of AF. A recent post hoc analysis from DECLARE-TIMI-58 indicated beneficial effects of dapagliflozin on the incidence of AF,<sup>26</sup> which should then lead to a lower risk of ischemic stroke. We did not see a significant reduction of AF risk by canagliflozin versus placebo in the CANVAS Program (n=209; HR, 0.84 [95% CI, 0.64–1.12]; *P*=0.23)<sup>12</sup> and CREDENCE (n=115; HR, 0.76 [95% CI,

0.53–1.10]; *P*=0.15), but there was some evidence of protection against AF by SGLT2i across the 3 studies combined.

Although there were few events, the meta-analysis showed a significant reduction in hemorrhagic stroke with no heterogeneity across the EMPA-REG OUTCOME, CANVAS Program, and CREDENCE trials, suggesting a potential benefit of SGLT2i on hemorrhagic events. Blood pressure lowering, which can be achieved with SGLT2i, leads to greater reduction for hemorrhagic stroke compared with other stroke subtypes.<sup>27</sup> A recent study reported an increased risk of hemorrhagic stroke in women with low LDL-C (<70 mg/dL) and triglyceride levels.<sup>28</sup> Although a significant increase of LDL-C and triglyceride by SGLT2i (that may contribute to the prevention of hemorrhagic stroke in those with low baseline LDL-C) was seen in the CANVAS Program, it was not confirmed in the CREDENCE and EMPA-REG OUTCOME trials. Further confirmation is needed to determine whether different SGLT2i have comparable treatment effects on hemorrhagic stroke and if any variation in their effects between ischemic and hemorrhagic stroke or across ischemic stroke subtypes are attributed to different underlying cause.

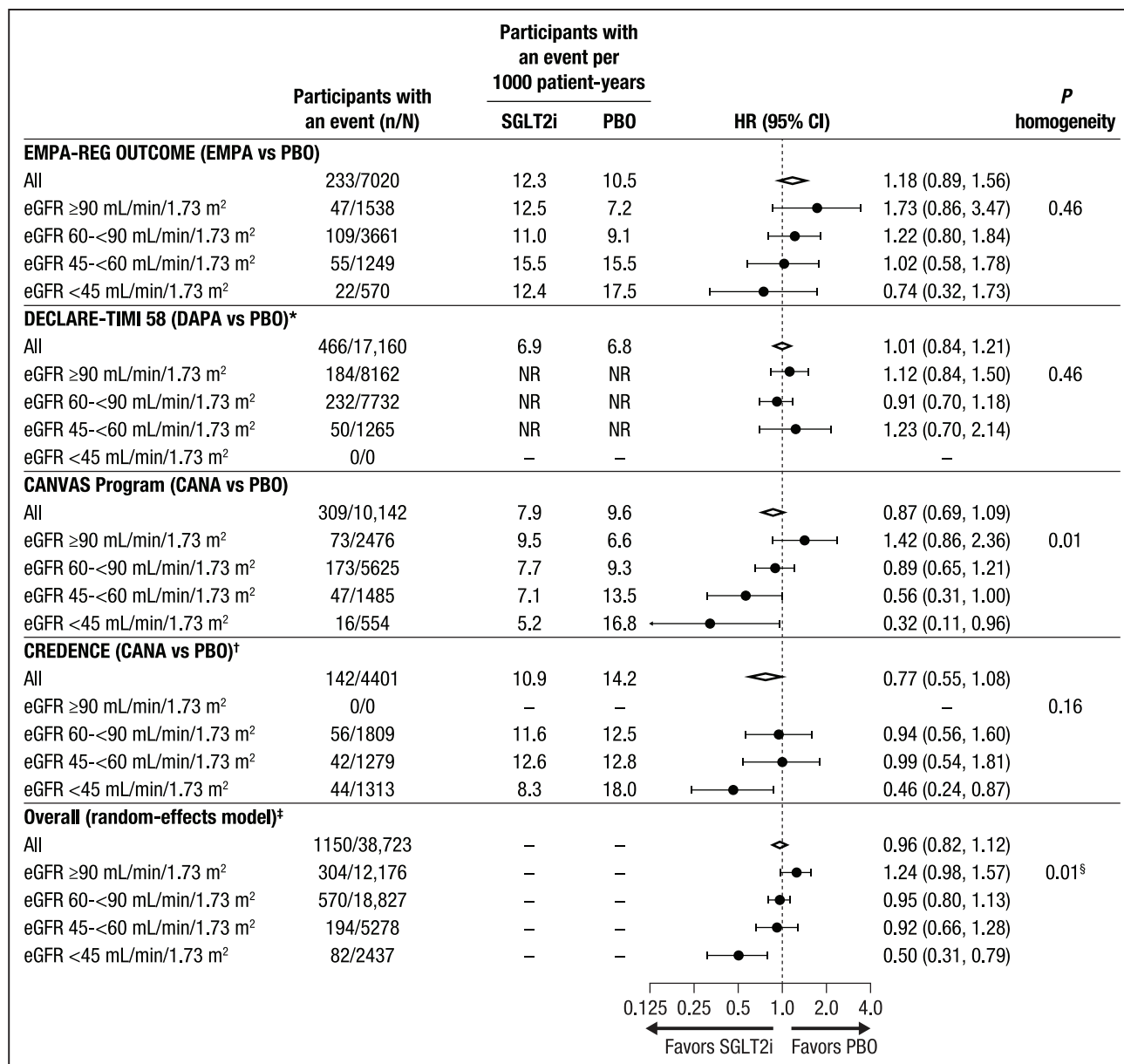
The mechanism by which kidney function modifies the effects of SGLT2i on stroke risk is unclear. In terms of possible mediators of the heterogeneity, the greater



**Figure 3. Meta-analysis of the treatment effects of sodium glucose cotransporter 2 inhibitors (SGLT2i) on stroke and stroke subtypes.**

CANA indicates canagliflozin; CANVAS, Canagliflozin Cardiovascular Assessment Study; CREDENCE, Canagliflozin and Renal Events in Diabetes With Established Nephropathy Clinical Evaluation; DAPA, dapagliflozin; DECLARE-TIMI-58, Dapagliflozin Effect on Cardiovascular Events–Thrombolysis in Myocardial Infarction 58; EMPA, empagliflozin; EMPA-REG OUTCOME, EMPA Cardiovascular Outcome Event Trial in Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus Patients; HR, hazard ratio; NR, not reported; and PBO, placebo. <sup>†</sup>Data on ischemic stroke. <sup>‡</sup>Hazard ratio was estimated by risk ratio.

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**Figure 4. Effects of sodium glucose cotransporter 2 inhibitors (SGLT2i) on stroke according to baseline kidney function.** CANVA, canagliflozin; CANVAS, Canagliflozin Cardiovascular Assessment Study; CREDESCENCE, Canagliflozin and Renal Events in Diabetes With Established Nephropathy Clinical Evaluation; DAPA, dapagliflozin; DECLARE-TIMI-58, Dapagliflozin Effect on Cardiovascular Events–Thrombolysis in Myocardial Infarction 58; eGFR, estimated glomerular filtration rate; EMPA, empagliflozin; EMPA-REG OUTCOME, Empagliflozin Cardiovascular Outcome Event Trial in Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus Patients; HR, hazard ratio; NR, not reported; and PBO, placebo; \*Ischemic stroke only. †Based on screening (rather than baseline) eGFR. ‡The heterogeneity of meta-analysis is  $I^2=36.5\%$  ( $P=0.19$ ) for all participants,  $I^2=0.0\%$  ( $P=0.44$ ) for eGFR  $\geq 90$  mL/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup>,  $I^2=0.0\%$  ( $P=0.65$ ) for eGFR 60–<90 mL/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup>,  $I^2=24.7\%$  ( $P=0.26$ ) for eGFR 45–<60 mL/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup> and  $I^2=0.0\%$  ( $P=0.46$ ) for eGFR <45 mL/(min·1.73 m<sup>2</sup>). §Tested by random-effects meta-regression with the hypothesis of no linear trend across ordered eGFR categories (eGFR  $\geq 90$ , 60–<90, 45–<60, and <45 mL/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup>).

blood pressure–lowering effect of canagliflozin in the CREDESCENCE participants with lower screening eGFR might provide an explanation,<sup>29</sup> but it was not seen in the CANVAS Program.<sup>13</sup> The treatment effects of canagliflozin on AF were also consistent regardless of the screening eGFR in CREDESCENCE, similar to the result of DECLARE-TIMI-58. An elevation of blood viscosity with SGLT2i treatment, as reflected by a rise in hematocrit,

has raised concerns about possible adverse effects of SGLT2i on stroke. However, the between-group difference was small in every study observed that has reported data.<sup>30</sup> Our analysis did not show differential effects of canagliflozin on hematocrit across eGFR subgroups in the CANVAS Program or the CREDESCENCE trial.

The main limitation of the CREDESCENCE stroke analysis is the lack of statistical power for stroke events, part



of the secondary composite outcome of major adverse cardiovascular events (cardiovascular death, myocardial infarction, or stroke) in the original trial. The early closure of the trial reduced stroke events further. To enhance statistical power, we undertook a study-level meta-analysis by including stroke data from other large-scale CVOTs of SGLT2i in patients with T2DM, and these analyses suggest no protective effect of SGLT2i against overall stroke. Prior exclusion of those with CKD from CVOTs<sup>31</sup> and the absence of dedicated randomized trials designed to test stroke risk in patients with CKD mean that most evidence on stroke prevention in CKD is extrapolated from trials in people with normal kidney function or from observational studies. This has resulted in low-level guideline recommendations, and thus these results may provide additional useful information. Our data also provide rationale for further investigation of the effects of SGLT2i on stroke or stroke subtypes risk among patients with significantly impaired kidney function, either through overviews including additional data from ongoing trials, as they become available, or through dedicated new studies.

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, neither the CREDENCE trial nor the meta-analysis of the 4 existing studies provided definite evidence of stroke prevention by SGLT2i. There may be differential effects of SGLT2i on stroke risk according to the level of kidney function and possible benefit in those with significantly reduced kidney function or benefit for hemorrhagic stroke and AF, which warrant further investigation.

## ARTICLE INFORMATION

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### Affiliations

The George Institute for Global Health, UNSW Sydney, Australia (Z.Z., M.J.J., Q.L., B.L.N., V.P., B.N.). Department of Radiology, Ren Ji Hospital, School of Medicine, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China (Z.Z.). Concord Repatriation General Hospital, Sydney, Australia (M.J.J.). Cardiovascular Division, Brigham and Women's Hospital and Baim Institute for Clinical Research, Boston, MA (C.P.C.). Department of Clinical Pharmacy and Pharmacology, University of Groningen, University Medical Center Groningen, the Netherlands (D.d.Z.). Janssen Research & Development, LLC, Raritan, NJ (R.E.). Division of Nephrology, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, Canada (A.L.). Stanford Center for Clinical Research, Department of Medicine, Stanford University School of Medicine, CA (K.W.M.). Royal North Shore Hospital, Sydney, Australia (V.P.). Charles Perkins Centre, University of Sydney, Australia (B.N.). Imperial College London, London, United Kingdom (B.N.). Westmead Applied Research Centre, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia (R.I.L.). The George Institute for Global Health, Sydney, Australia (R.I.L.).

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### Supplemental Materials

Expanded Materials & Methods

Online Table 1

Online Figures I–VI

## APPENDIX

## CREDENCE Trial Investigators

Argentina: Rodolfo Andres Ahuad Guerrero, Diego Aizenberg, Juan Pablo Albusi, Andres Alvarisqueta, Ines Bartolacci, Mario Alberto Berli, Anselmo Bordonava, Pedro Caelella, Maria Cecilia Cantero, Luis Rodolfo Cartasegna, Esteban Cercos, Gabriela Cecilia Coloma, Hugo Colombo, Victor Commendatore, Jesus Cuadrado, Carlos Alberto Cuneo, Ana Maria Cusumano, Walter Guillermo Douthat, Ricardo Dario Dran, Eduardo Farias, Maria Florencia Fernandez, Hernan Finkelstein, Guillermo Fragale, Jose Osvaldo Fretes, Nestor Horacio Garcia, Anibal Gastaldi, Elizabeth Gelerstein, Jorge Archibaldo Glenny, Joaquin Pablo Gonzalez, Patricia del Carmen Gonzalez Colaso, Claudia Goycosa, Gustavo Cristian Greloni, Adrian Guinsburg, Sonia Hermida, Luis Isaias Juncos, Maria Isabel Klyver, Florencia Kraft, Fernando Krynski, Paulina Virginia Lanchiotti, Ricardo Alfonso Leon de la Fuente, Nora Marchetta, Pablo Mele, Silvia Nicolai, Pablo Antonio Novoa, Silvia Ines Orio, Fabian Oterras, Alejandra Oviedo, Pablo Raffaele, Jorge Hector Resk, Lucas Rista, Nelson Rodriguez Papini, Jorgelina Sala, Juan Carlos Santos, Lilia Beatriz Schiavi, Horacio Sessa, Tomas Smith Casabella, Maria Rosa Ulla, Maria Valdez, Augusto Vallejos, Adriana Villarino, Virginia Esther Visco, Alfredo Wassermann, Cesar Javier Zaidman; Australia: Ngai Wah Cheung, Carolyn Droste, Ian Fraser, David Johnson, Peak Mann Mah, Kathy Nicholls, David Packham, Joseph Proietto, Anthony Roberts, Simon Roger, Venessa Tsang; Brazil: Roberto Abrão Raduan, Fernando Augusto Alves da Costa, Celso Amodeo, Luiz Alberto Andreotti Turatti, Rachel Bregman, Fernanda Cristina Camelo Sanches, Luis Henrique Canani, Antônio Roberto Chacra, João Lindolfo Cunha Borges, Sérgio Alberto Cunha Vêncio, Roberto Jorge da Silva Franco, Domingos d'Ávila, Evandro de Souza Portes, Pedro de Souza, Luciane Mônica Deboni, Fadlo Krage Filho, Bruno Geloneze Neto, Marcus Gomes, Suely Keiko Kohara, Elizete Feitel, Jose Francisco Kerr Saraiva, Hugo Roberto Kurtz Lisboa, Fabiana Loss de Carvalho Contieri, Rosângela Milagres, Renan Montenegro Junior, Claudia Moreira de Brito, Miguel Nasser Hissa, Ângela Regina Nazario Sabbag, Irene Noronha, Daniel Panarotto, Roberto Pecóits Filho, Márcio Antônio Pereira, Wladimir Saporito, Antonio Scafuto Scotton, Tiago Schuch, Roberto Simões de Almeida, Cássio Slompo Ramos, João Soares Felício, Fernando Thomé, Jean Carlo Tibes Hachmann, Sérgio Yamada, Cesar Yóiti Hayashida, Tarrisa Beatrice Zanata Petry, Maria Teresa Zanella; Bulgaria: Viktoria Andreeva, Angelina Angelova, Stefan Dimitrov, Veselka Genadieva, Gabriela Genova-Hristova, Kiril Hristozov, Zdravko Kamenov, Atanas Koundurdjiev, Lachezar Lozanov, Viktor Margaritov, Boyan Nonchev, Rangel Rangelov, Alexander Shinkov, Margarita Temelkova, Ekaterina Velichkova, Andrian Yakov; Canada: Naresh Aggarwal, Ronnie Aronson, Harpreet Bajaj, David Cherny, Guy Chouinard, James Conway, Serge Cournoyer, Gerald DaRozza, Sacha De Serres, François Dubé, Ronald Goldenberg, Anil Gupta, Milan Gupta, Sam Henein, Hasnain Khandwala, Lawrence Leiter, Adeera Levin, François Madore, Alan McMahon, Norman Muirhead, Vincent Pichette, Remi Rabasa-Lhoret, Andrew Steele, Navdeep Tangri, Ali Torshizi, Vincent Woo, Nadia Zalunardo; Chile: María Alicia Fernández Montenegro, Juan Gonzalo Godoy Jorquera, Marcelo Medina Fariña, Victor Saavedra Gajardo, Margarita Vejar; China: Nan Chen, Qinkai Chen, Shenglian Gan, Yaozhong Kong, Detian Li, Wenge Li, Xuemei Li, Hongli Lin, Jian Liu, Weiping Lu, Hong Mao, Yan Ren, Weihong Song, Jiao Sun, Lin Sun, Ping Tu, Guixia Wang, Jinkui Yang, Aiping Yin, Xueqing Yu, Minghui Zhao, Hongguang Zheng; Colombia: Jose Luis Accini Mendoza, Edgar Arcos, Jorge Avendano, Jorge Ernesto Andres Diaz Ruiz, Luis Hernando Garcia Ortiz, Alexander Gonzalez, Eric Hernandez Triana, Juan Diego Higuera, Natalia Malaver, Dora Inés Molina de Salazar, Ricardo Rosero, Monica Alexandra Terront Lozano, Luis Valderrama Cometa, Alex Valenzuela, Ruben Dario Vargas Alonso, Ivan Villegas, Hernan Yupanqui; Czech Republic: Dagmar Bartaskova, Petr Barton, Jana Belobradkova, Lenka Dohnalova, Tomas Drasnar, Richard Ferkl, Katarina Halciakova, Vera Klokocnikova, Richard Kovar, Jiri Lastuvka, Martin Lukac, Satu Pesickova, Karel Peterka, Jiri Pumpřila, Ivan Rychlík, Frantisek Saudek, Vladimir Tesar, Martin Valis, Pavel Weiner, Stanislav Zemek; France: Eric Alamartine, Sophie Borot, Bertrand Cariou, Bertrand Dussol, Jean-Pierre Fauvel, Pierre Gourdy, Alexandre Klein, Yannick Le Meur, Alfred Penforns, Ronan Roussel, Pierre-Jean Saulnier, Eric Thervet, Philippe Zaoui; Germany: Volker Burst, Markus Faghih, Grit Faulmann, Hermann Haller, Reinhold Jerwan-Keim, Stephan Maxeiner, Björn Paschen, Georg Plassmann, Ludger Rose; Guatemala: Ronaldo Arturo Gonzalez Orellana, Franklin Paul Haase, Juan Pablo Moreira Diaz, Luis Alberto Ramirez Roca, Jose Antonio Sánchez Arenales, José Vicente Sanchez Polo, Erick Turcios Juarez; Hungary: Gyongyi Csecsei, Botond Csiky, Peter Danos, Laszlo Deak, Mihaly Dudas, Eleonora Harcsa, Katalin Keltai, Sandor Keresztesi, Krisztian Kiss, Laszlo Konyves, Lajos Major, Margit Miledter, Marta Molnar, Janos Muksi, Tamas Oroszlan, Ivan Ory, Gyorgy Paragh, Eva Peterfai, Gizella Petro, Katalin Revesz, Robert Takacs, Sandor Vangel, Szilard Vasas, Marianna Zsom; India: Abraham Oommen, Sree Bhushan Raju, Deepak Dewan, M. Edwin Fernando, Natarajan Gopalakrishnan, Noble Gracious, Hansraj Alva, Dinesh Jain, C. B. Keshavamurthy, Dinesh Khullar, Manisha

Sahay, Jayameena Peringat, Narayan Prasad, K. Satyanarayana Rao, Sreedhar Reddy, Sreelatha Meleamadathil, Bhimavarapu Sudhakar, Ramesh Chandra Yyasaam; Italy: Riccardo Bonadonna, Pietro Castellino, Antonio Ceriello, Luca Chiovato, Salvatore De Cosmo, Luca De Nicola, Giuseppe Derosa, Alberto Di Carlo, Graziano Di Cianni, Giovanni Frascà, Giorgio Fuiano, Giovanni Gambaro, Giacomo Garibotto, Carlo Giorda, Fabio Malberti, Marcora Mandreoli, Edoardo Mannucci, Emanuela Orsi, Piermarco Piatti, Domenico Santoro, Ferdinando Carlo Sasso, Gaetano Serviddio, Andrea Stella, Roberto Trevisan, Anna Maria Veronelli, Luca Zanolli; Japan: Hitoshi Akiyama, Hiromi Aoki, Akimichi Asano, Tadashi Iitsuka, Shizuoka Kajiyama, Susumu Kashine, Toshio Kawada, Takamoto Koderu, Hiroshi Kono, Kazunori Koyama, Yasuro Kumeda, Shozo Miyachi, Kazuyuki Mizuyama, Tetsuji Niiya, Hiroko Oishi, Satoshi Ota, Terue Sakakibara, Masahiko Takai, Osamu Tomonaga, Mitsuru Tsujimoto, Takashi Wada, Masakiyo Wakasugi, Yasushi Wakida, Takayuki Watanabe, Masayo Yamada, Kazuhiro Yanagida, Toshihiko Yanase, Wataru Yumita; Lithuania: Egle Gaupsiene, Dalia Kozloviene, Antanas Navickas, Egle Urbanaviciene; Malaysia: Rohana Abdul Ghani, Khalid Abdul Kadir, Norsiah Ali, Mohd Daud Che Yusof, Chye Lee Gan, Mastura Ismail, Wei Yen Kong, Swee Win Lam, Li Yuan Lee, Soo Kun Lim, Chek Loong Loh, Anita Bhajan Manocha, Kee Sing Ng, Nik Nur Fatnoon Nik Ahmad, Vanessa Ratnasingam, Saiful Shahrizal Bin Shudim, Paranthaman Vengadasalam; Mexico: Luis David Abreira Munoz, Melchor Alpizar Salazar, Juan Baas Cruz, Mario Burgos Soto, Jose Chevaile Ramos, Alfredo Chew Wong, Jose Ricardo Correa Rotter, Tonatiu Diaz Escalante, Favio Edmundo Enriquez Sosa, Fernando Flores Lozano, Luis Fernando Flota Cervera, Paul Frenk Baron, Cecilia Garcia Ballesteros, Jose David Gomez Rangel, Luis Enrique Herrera Jimenez, Sergio Saul Irizar Santana, Fernando Jimenez Flores, Hugo Laviada Molina, Rosa Isela Luna Ceballos, Belia Martin del Campo Blanco, Guadalupe Morales Franco, Oscar Tarsicio Moreno Loza, Cynthia Mustieles Rocha, Gregorio Orador Vera, Ricardo Orozco Castellanos, Juan Peralta Calcano, Miguel Angel Reyes Rosano, Hiromi Rodriguez Pattzi, Juan Rosas Guzman, Isabel Erika Rucker Joerg, Sandra Berenice Saavedra Sanchez, Jose Hector Sanchez Mijangos, Pablo Serrano Sanson, Juan Alfredo Tamayo y Orozco, Eloisa Tellez Chavez, Alejandro Valdes Cepeda, Luis Venegas Carrillo, Juan Villagordoa Mesa, Rolando Zamarripa Escobedo; New Zealand: John Baker, Paul Noonan, Russell Scott, Robert Walker, Edward Watson, Michael Williams, Simon Young; Philippines: Zaynab Abejuela, Jeimeen Agra, Grace Aquitania, Clodoaldo Caringal, Rhea Severina Comia, Lalaine Delos Santos, Olivert Gomez, Cecilia Jimeno, Florence Santos, Gerry Tan, Marsha Tolentino, Christy Yao, Yvette Ethel Yap, Ma. Dovie Lallaine Ygpara; Poland: Renata Bijata-Bronisz, Lucyna Hotlos, Andrzej Januszewicz, Barbara Kaczmarek, Anna Kaminska, Lech Lazuka, Andrzej Madej, Stanislaw Mazur, Dorota Mlodawska-Choluj, Michal Nowicki, Grazyna Orlowska-Kowalik, Grazyna Popenda, Barbara Rewerska, Dariusz Sowinski; Romania: Liliana Monica Angelescu, Veronica Anghel, Rodica-Ioana Avram, Mihaela-Magdalena Busegeanu, Adriana Cif, Dana Cosma, Carmen Crisan, Luiza Despina Demian, Ioana Emilia Ferariu, Ildiko Halmagyi, Nicolae Hancu, Mircea Munteanu, Doru Negru, Adriana Gabriela Onaca, Ligia Petrica, Amorin Remus Popa, Aurelian-Emil Ranetti, Cristian Serafinceanu, Cristina Toarba; Russia: Alina Agafiyina, Olga Barbarash, Olga Barysheva, Daniil Chizhov, Vladimir Dobronravov, Alexander Dreval, Irina Giinkina, Elena Grineva, Vladimir Khirmanov, Elena Kolmakova, Tatiana Koroleva, Liudmila Kvitkova, Viacheslav Marashev, Ashot Mkrtumyan, Tatiana Morugova, Galina Nagibovich, Oleg Nagibovich, Sergei Nedogoda, Irina Osipova, Tatiana Raskina, Yulia Samoylova, Olga Sazonova, Minara Shamkhalova, Elena Shutemova, Yuriy Shwartz, Oleg Uriasyev, Sergey Vorobyev, Anna Zateyshchikova, Dmitry Zateyshchikov, Tatyana Zykova; Serbia: Slobodan Antic, Miodrag Djordjevic, Aleksandra Kendereski, Katarina Lalic, Nebojsa Lalic, Vesna Popovic-Radinovic; Slovakia: Jana Babikova, Olga Benusova, Ingrid Buganova, Jan Culak, Andrej Dupina, Jana Dzuonova, Peter Fulop, Adriana Ilavska, Emil Martinka, Zuzana Ochodnicka, Daniel Pella, Iveta Smatanova; South Africa: Fayzal Ahmed, Aysha Badat, Johannes Breed, Lawrence Distiller, Vmladhevi Govender, Raven-dran Govender, Mukesh Joshi, Jaco Jurgens, Gulam Latiff, Landman Lombard, Mohamed Mookadam, Nomangesi Ngcakan, Hendrik Nortje, Helena Oosthuizen, Larisha Pillay-Ramaya, Hans Prozesky, Jeevren Reddy, Paul Rheeder, Mary Seebler; South Korea: Dong-Wan Chae, Young Min Cho, In-Kyung Jeong, Sin Gon Kim, Yeong Hoon Kim, Hyuk-Sang Kwon, Min Jeong Kwon, Byung-Wan Lee, JungEun Lee, Moon-Kyu Lee, Moon-Suk Nam, Kook-Hwan Oh, Cheol-Young Park, Sun-Hee Park, Kun Ho Yoon; Spain: Pere Alvarez Garcia, Luis Asmarats Mercadal, Clara Barrios, Fernando Cereto Castro, Secundino Cigarra Guldries, Marta Dominguez Lopez, Jesus Egido de los Rios, Gema Fernandez Fresnedo, Antonio Galan Serrano, Isabel Garcia, Francisco Javier Gonzalez Martinez, Jose Esteban Jodar Gimeno, Manuel Lopez Mendosa, Tamara Malek Marin, Cristobal Morales Portillo, Maria Antonia Munar Vila, Manuel Molez Torres, Javier Nieto Iglesias, Jonay Pantoja Perez, Merce Perez Vera, Jose M<sup>a</sup> Portoles Perez, Maria Angustias Quesada Simón, Rafael Simo Canonge, Alfonso Soto Gonzalez, Manel Terns Riera, Francisco Jose Tinahones Madueno, Mercedes Velo Plaza; Taiwan: Chwen-Tzuei Chang, Lee-Ming Chuang, Te-Lin Hsia, Chang-Hsun Hsieh, Shang-

Jyh Hwang, Chih-Ching Lin, Yung-Chuan Lu, Wayne H-H Sheu; Ukraine: Olga Barna, Svitlana D. Bilyk, Volodymyr Botsyurko, Iryna Dudar, Ivan Fushyete, Olga Godlevska, Oleksandr Golovchenko, Olga Gyryna, Anatoliy Kazmirchuk, Mykola Kolesnyk, Liliya Komisarenko, Oleksii Korzh, Nonna Kravchun, Oleg Legun, Borys Mankovskyy, Liliya Martyniuk, Yuriy Mostovoy, Nataliia Pashkovska, Larysa Pererva, Tetyana Pertseva, Oleksandr Samoylov, Ivan Smirnov, Yevgeniya Svyschenko, Halyna Tomashkevych, Ivan Topchii, Nadiya Tryshchuk, Vira Tseluyko, Vadym Vizir, Maryna Vlasenko, Tetiana Zlova, Liliia Zub; United Arab Emirates: Salah Abusnana, Mohamed Railey; United Kingdom: Kamal Abougilila, Paul Ainsworth, Zishan Ali, Vijayaraman Arutchelvam, Maria Barnard, Srikanth Bellary, Emyr Davies, Mark Davies, Simon Davies, Alison Dawson, Mohsen El Kossi, Patrick English, Donald Fraser, Luigi Gnudi, Anthony Gunstone, Timothy Hall, Wasim Hanif, Alan Jackson, Andrew Johnson, Franklin Joseph, Singhan Krishnan, Mick Kumwenda, Iain MacDougall, Paul Nixon, Joseph O'Hare, Sam Philip, Shenaz Ramtoola, Manish Saxena, Daves Sennik, Godwin Simon, Baldev Singh, Jeffrey Stephens, Anna Strzelecka, Rehan Symonds, Wayne Turner, Mona Wahba, John Wakeling, David Wheeler, Peter Winocour; United States: Joseph Abdallah, Raied Abdullah, Matthew Abramowitz, Idalia Acosta, Joseph Aiello, Laura Akright, Ayim Akyea-Djamon, Rajendran Alappan, Radica Alicic, Amer Al-Karadshah, Dale Crawford Allison, Carlos Arauz-Pacheco, Shahabul Arfeen, Ahmed Arif, Moogali Arvind, Naveen Atray, Ahmed Awad, George Bakris, Peggy Barnhill, Elizabeth Barranco, Carlos Barrera, Matthew Beacom, Venkata Behara, Diogo Belo, Rhonda Bentley-Lewis, Ramon Berenguer, Lidia Bermudez, Marializa Bernardo, Mihaela Biscoveanu, Cynthia Bowman-Stroud, Donald Brandon, Osvaldo Brusco, Robert Busch, Yamil Canaan, Alicia Chililo, Tom Christensen, Cynthia Christiano, Elena Christofides, Caroucel Chuateco, Kenneth Cohen, Robert Cohen, Debbie Cohen-Stein, Charles Cook, Daniel Coyne, Nizar Daboul, Riad Darwish, Adarsh Daswani, Kenneth Deck, Cyrus Desouza, Devasmita Dev, Monika Dhillon, Sohan Dua, Frank Eder, Ana Maria Elosegui, Mohamed El-Shahawy, John Ervin, Alberto Esquenazi, John Evans, Steven Fishbane, Juan Frias, Eugenia Galindo-Ramos, Claude Galphin, Adline Ghazi, Enrique Gonzalez, David Gorson, Anupama Gowda, Barbara Greco, Stephen Grubb, Rakesh Gulati, Jamal Hammoud, Stuart Handelsman, Israel Hartman, Kenneth Hershon, Daniel Hiser, George Hon, Radu Jacob, Maria Jaime, Aamir Jamal, Charles Kaupke, Gerald Keightley, Elizabeth Kern, Rakhi Khanna, Zeid Khitan, Sun Kim, Nelson Kopyt, Csaba Kovessy, Gopal Krishna, Jeffrey (Jay) Kropp, Amrendra Kumar, Jayant Kumar, Neil Kumar, Jorge Kusniir, Wendy Lane, Mary Lawrence, Lawrence Lehrner, John Lentz, Dennis Levinson, Derek Lewis, Kenneth Liss, Andreas Maddux, Hiralal Maheshwari, Sreedhar Mandayam, Isam Marar, Bhasker Mehta, John Middleton, Jorge Mordujovich, Ramon Moreda, Moustafa Moustafa, Samuel Mujica Trenche, Mohanram Narayanan, Javier Narvarte, Tareq Nassar, George Newman, Brian Nichol, Philip Nicol, Josier Nisnisan, A. Kaldun Nossuli, Chamberlain Obialo, Sarah Olelewe, Michael Oliver, Andrew O'Shaughnessy, John Padron, Rohit Pankhaniya, Reginald Parker, Dvesh Patel, Gnyandev Patel, Nina Patel, Humberto Paven, Armando Perez, Carlos Perez, Alan Perlman, Karlon Pettis, Walter Pharr, Andrea Phillips, Raman Purighalla, Luis Quesada-Suarez, Rajiv Ranjan, Sanjeev Rastogi, Jakkidi Reddy, Marc Rendell, Lisa Rich, Michael Robinson, Hector Rodriguez, Sylvia Rosas, Fadi Saba, Rallabhandi Sankaram, Ravi Sarin, Robert Schreiman, David Scott, Mohamed Sekkarie, John Sensenbrenner, Muhammad Shakeel, Michael Shantik, Sylvia Shaw, Stephen Smith, Richard Solomon, Amy Sprague, Leslie Spry, Pusadee Suchinda, Senan Sultan, Prasanth Surampudi, Sherry Sussman, Anjanette Tan, Antonio Terrelonge, Michael Thompson, Fernando Trespalacios, Bruce Trippe, Pilar Trueba, Marcel Twahirwa, John Updegrove, Peter Van Buren, Mark Vannorsdall, Freemu Varghese, Pedro Velasquez-Mieyer, Sailaja Ventrapragada, Goga Vukotic, Khurram Wadud, Mark Warren, Henry Watson, Ronald Watts, Daniel Weiner, James Welker, Jean Welsh, Shelley Williams, Michelle Zaniewski-Singh.

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