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(54) **BREAST PROSTHESIS FOR PATIENTS WITH EDEMA**

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(58) **Field of Classification Search** 623/7-8
See application file for complete search history.

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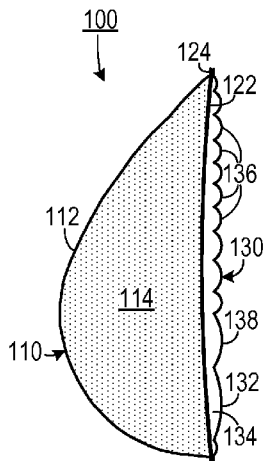
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A breast prosthesis is adapted to massage a patient's chest so as to encourage circulation of interstitial lymph fluid. A breast form member has a front portion that has a shape corresponding to a human breast and a back portion. A protrusion member extends from the back portion. The protrusion member defines at least one protrusion extending outwardly therefrom. The protrusion is disposed so that when the breast prosthesis held against the patient at a preselected location, the protrusion will massage the preselected location, thereby encouraging circulation of interstitial lymph fluid.

16 Claims, 3 Drawing Sheets



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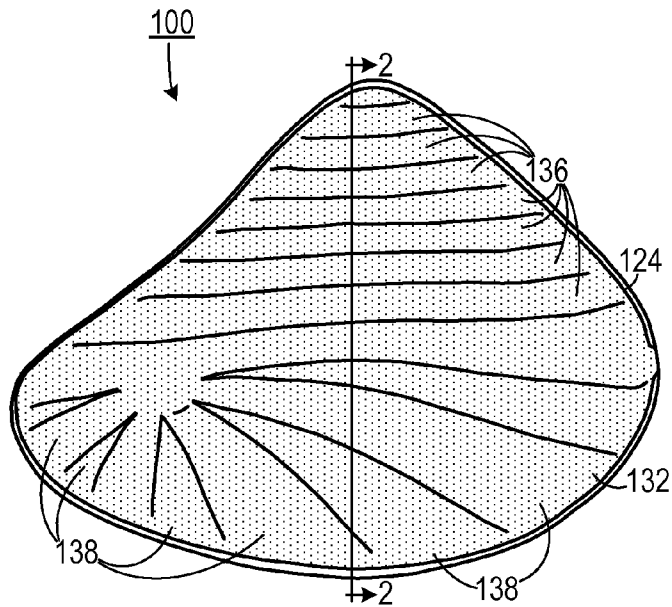


FIG. 1

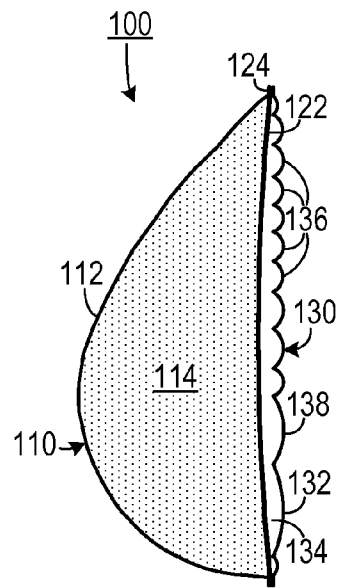


FIG. 2

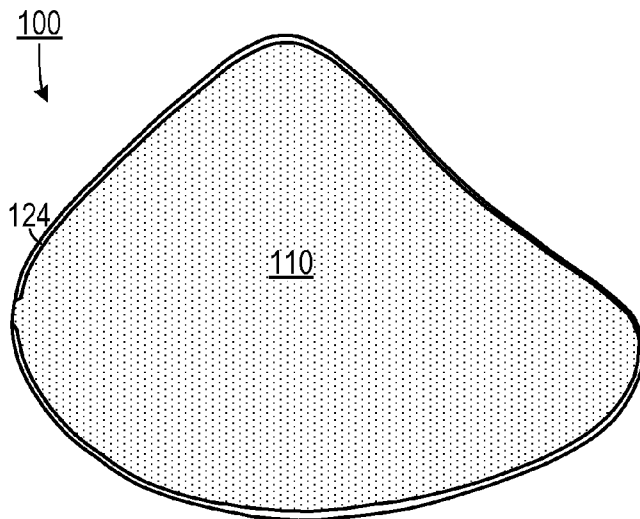


FIG. 3

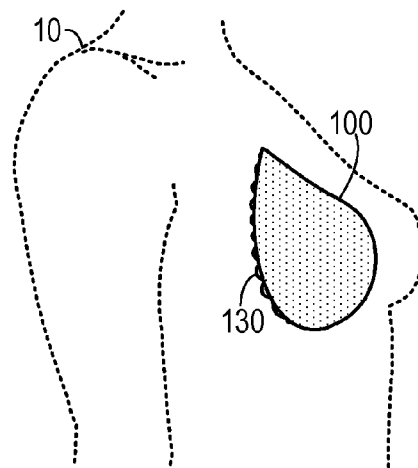


FIG. 4

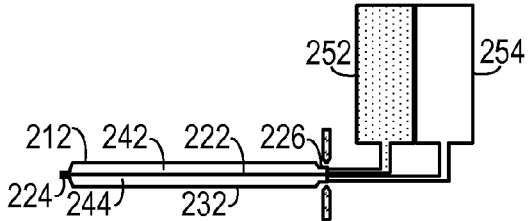


FIG. 5A

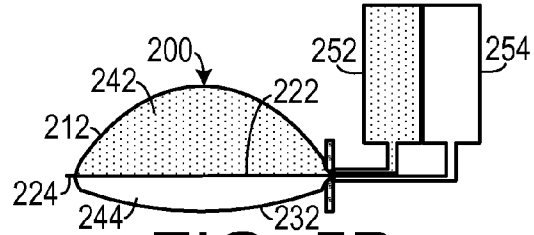


FIG. 5B

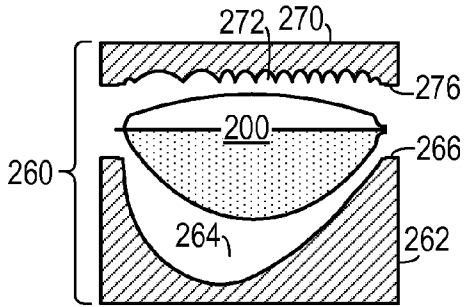


FIG. 5D

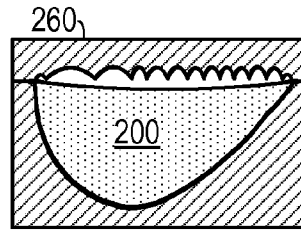


FIG. 5C

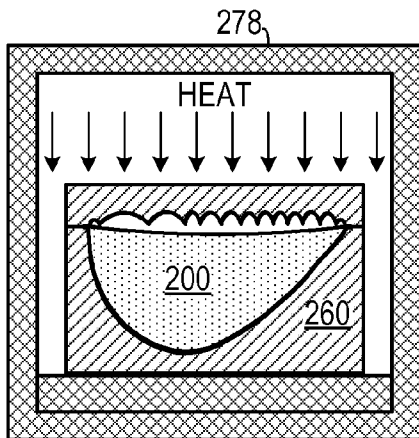


FIG. 5E

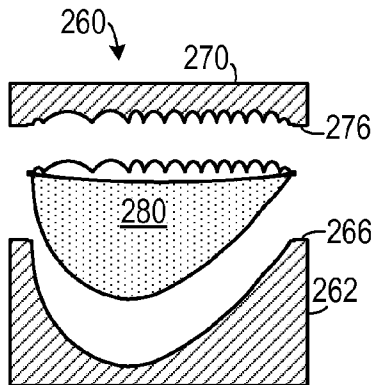


FIG. 5F

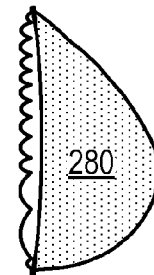


FIG. 5G

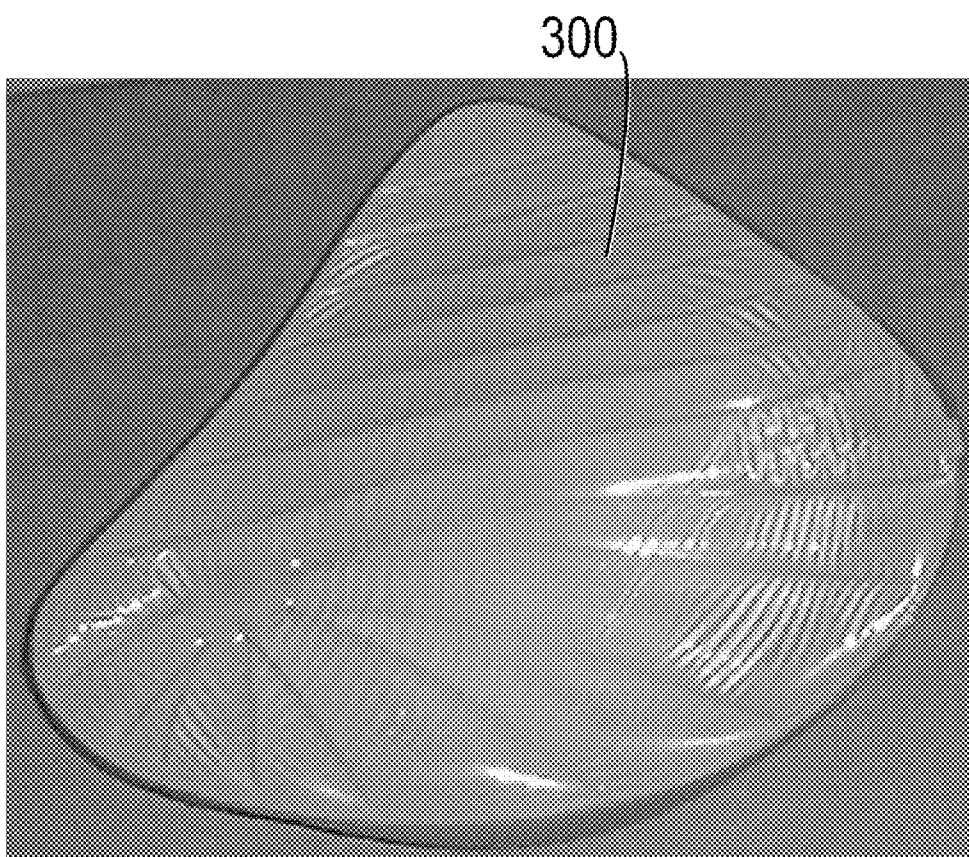


FIG. 6

BREAST PROSTHESIS FOR PATIENTS WITH EDEMA

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to prosthetic devices and, more specifically, a breast prosthesis that provides massaging action to encourage circulation of lymph fluid.

2. Description of the Prior Art

Secondary lymphedema of the upper extremities and upper trunk, usually on the affected (surgical side) is a condition often associated with treatment for breast cancer. Surgery, chemotherapy and radiation treatments damage the lymph nodes of the chest and axilla. The damaged lymph nodes have difficulty moving interstitial lymph fluid. The stagnant fluid can cause painful edema in the chest and arm.

Various products have been used to alleviate the symptoms of lymphedema. One system employs pads that direct lymph fluid flow through channels of ribbed fabric filled with foam. This system is bulky and requires additional coverage, such as a compression garment or sleeve, to hold the pad in the correct location. Another system employs a vest that works in a similar manner, except that the vest is a self-supporting garment. However, the vest must be custom produced and is, therefore, expensive for the end-user. Another alternative method of relieving lymphedema symptoms is to place pieces of foam in specific areas to provide pressure at specific sites on the patient's chest. Such foam requires additional support.

Many women who have had mastectomies wear a breast prosthesis at the affected site. Typically, a breast prosthesis is made to look like a natural breast. It is placed against the patient's chest and is typically supported by a brassiere. Such breast prostheses do little to relieve the symptoms of chest edema.

Therefore, there is a need for a single-piece breast prosthesis that will serve as a prosthesis for the removed breast and also provide a massaging action to encourage flow of lymph fluid.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The disadvantages of the prior art are overcome by the present invention which, in one aspect, is a breast prosthesis adapted to massage a patient's chest so as to encourage circulation of interstitial lymph fluid. A breast form member has a front portion that has a shape corresponding to a human breast and a back portion. A protrusion member extends from the back portion. The protrusion member defines at least one protrusion extending outwardly therefrom. The protrusion is disposed so that when the breast prosthesis held against the patient at a preselected location, the protrusion will massage the preselected location, thereby encouraging circulation of interstitial lymph fluid.

In another aspect, the invention is a mould for making breast prostheses having a front portion and a back portion. A front member has a front mating surface and defines a first cavity opening to the front mating surface. The first cavity has a shape that corresponds to the front portion of the breast prosthesis. A rear member has a rear mating surface, which is complimentary to the front mating surface. The rear member defines a second cavity opening to the rear mating surface. The second cavity has a shape that is complimentary to a shape of at least one prosthesis protrusion that is disposed so that a breast prosthesis cast from the mould will include at least one prosthesis protrusion that is configured to massage a

wearer's chest so as to encourage circulation of interstitial lymph fluid in an area of the wearer's chest adjacent to the prosthesis protrusion.

In yet another aspect, the invention is a method of making a breast prosthesis having a front portion and a rear portion, in which a first layer of film is sealed to a second layer of film around a periphery so as to define a first chamber between the first layer of film and the second layer of film. A third layer of film is sealed to the second layer of film so as to define a second chamber between the second layer and the third layer. A first gel is injected into the first chamber. A second gel is injected into the second chamber. The first chamber is placed into a front member of a mould. The front member defines a first cavity that has a shape that corresponds to the front portion of the breast prosthesis. A rear member of the mould is placed on top of the second chamber. The rear member defines a second cavity having a shape that is complimentary to a shape of at least one prosthesis protrusion and that is disposed so that a breast prosthesis cast from the mould will include at least one prosthesis protrusion that is configured to massage a wearer's chest so as to encourage circulation of interstitial lymph fluid in an area of the wearer's chest adjacent to the prosthesis protrusion. The mould is placed in an oven so as to cure the first gel and the second gel and mold the film, thereby forming the breast prosthesis. The breast prosthesis is removed from the oven. The front member of the mould is separated from the rear member of the mould and the breast prosthesis is removed from the mould.

These and other aspects of the invention will become apparent from the following description of the preferred embodiments taken in conjunction with the following drawings. As would be obvious to one skilled in the art, many variations and modifications of the invention may be effected without departing from the spirit and scope of the novel concepts of the disclosure.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a back elevational view of one embodiment of a breast prosthesis.

FIG. 2 is a cross-sectional view of the embodiment shown in FIG. 1, taken along line 2-2.

FIG. 3 is a front elevational view of the embodiment shown in FIG. 1.

FIG. 4 is a side perspective view of the embodiment shown in FIG. 1 in use.

FIGS. 5A-5G are a series of schematic drawings showing one method of making a breast prosthesis.

FIG. 6 is a photograph of a back side of a commercial embodiment of a breast prosthesis.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

A preferred embodiment of the invention is now described in detail. Referring to the drawings, like numbers indicate like parts throughout the views. As used in the description herein and throughout the claims, the following terms take the meanings explicitly associated herein, unless the context clearly dictates otherwise: the meaning of "a," "an," and "the" includes plural reference, the meaning of "in" includes "in" and "on."

As shown in FIGS. 1-3, one representative embodiment includes a breast prosthesis 100 adapted to massage a patient's chest so as to encourage circulation of interstitial lymph fluid. The breast prosthesis 100 includes a front breast form member 110 that includes a front portion in a shape

corresponding to a human breast. A protrusion member **130** extends from the back of the front breast form member **110**. The protrusion member **130** defines a plurality of protrusions (such as a series of parallel latitudinal ribs **136**, series of ribs **138** in a rayed pattern issuing from a central location, bumps or other shapes) that extend outwardly from the protrusion member **130** so as to massage the patient's chest when the breast prosthesis **100** is worn against the patient's chest.

As shown in FIG. 4, the breast prosthesis **100** is typically placed with the protrusion member **130** against the chest of the patient **10** in a mastectomy site and is then held in place by a brassiere (not shown). Once in place, relative movement between the patient **10** and the prosthesis **100** generates a massaging action, which encourages a more natural flow of interstitial lymph fluids in the area around the protrusion member **130**.

The breast form member **110** includes a first layer of flexible film **112** and a second layer of flexible film **122** that is sealed to the first layer of flexible film **112** about a periphery **124** so as to define a first chamber **114**. Similarly, the protrusion member **130** includes a third layer flexible film **132** that is sealed to the second layer of flexible film **122**, also about the periphery **124** so as to define a second chamber **134**. The first layer of flexible film **112**, the second layer of flexible film **122** and the third layer of flexible film **132** are typically made from a polyurethane film.

The first chamber **114** and the second chamber **134** are both filled with a gel, which is typically a cured silicone gel. Curing of the gel causes the first chamber **114** to maintain the form of a breast and causes the second chamber **134** to maintain the form of the ribs **136** and **138**. In one embodiment, the composition of the gel in the second chamber **134** is selected to be firmer than the gel in the first chamber **114**. This allows for a natural firmness for the breast form member **110** while increasing the massaging action of the protrusion member **130**. In one alternative embodiment, the breast form member and the protrusion member could both be formed as part of a single contiguous chamber. Other gels besides silicone gels could be used, for example TPE, hydrogels and PU gels are examples of gels that may be used in certain embodiments.

As shown in FIGS. 5A-5G, in one method of making a breast prosthesis **280**, a first layer of polyurethane film **212**, a second layer of polyurethane film **222** and a third layer of polyurethane film **232** are sealed together along a periphery **224** (such as by heat sealing) to form a first chamber **242** and a second chamber **244** (not sealing a portion to allow for an injection sprue **226** into each chamber). The first chamber **142** is injected with an uncured first silicone gel **252** and the second chamber **144** is injected with an uncured second silicone gel **254** and the injection sprues **226** are sealed so as to form a breast prosthesis blank **200**.

The breast prosthesis blank **200** is placed inside of a mould **260**. The mould **260** includes a front member **262** and a rear member **270**. The front member **262** has a front mating surface **266** and defines a first cavity **264** that opens to the front mating surface **266** and has a shape that corresponds to the front portion of the desired breast prosthesis **280**. The rear member **270** has a rear mating surface **276** that is complementary to the front mating surface **266**. The rear member **270** defines a second cavity **272** that opens to the rear mating surface **276**. The second cavity **272** has a shape that is complementary to a shape of at least one prosthesis protrusion.

The breast prosthesis blank **200** and the mould **260** are placed in an oven **278** (or other type of heating unit) and maintained at a curing temperature for an amount of time necessary to cure the first silicone gel **252** and the second silicone gel **254** and thermally form or mold the film. Once

the gels are cured, the mould **260** and the now formed prosthesis **280** are removed from the oven **278** and allowed to cool. Once cool, the prosthesis is removed from the mould **260**, trimmed about the periphery and then washed. The prosthesis **280** is now ready for use.

A photograph of one commercial embodiment of a breast prosthesis **300** is shown in FIG. 6. A combination of latitudinal ribs and rayed ribs are employed in this embodiment.

The above described embodiments, while including the preferred embodiment and the best mode of the invention known to the inventor at the time of filing, are given as illustrative examples only. It will be readily appreciated that many deviations may be made from the specific embodiments disclosed in this specification without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. Accordingly, the scope of the invention is to be determined by the claims below rather than being limited to the specifically described embodiments above.

What is claimed is:

1. A breast prosthesis adapted to massage a patient's chest so as to encourage circulation of interstitial lymph fluid, comprising:

a. a breast form member having a front portion that has a shape corresponding to a human breast and a back portion, wherein the breast form member comprises a first layer of flexible film and a second layer of flexible film that is sealed to the first layer of flexible film about a periphery so as to define a first chamber therebetween, the first chamber being filled with a first gel; and

b. a protrusion member extending from the back portion, the protrusion member defining at least one protrusion extending outwardly therefrom that is disposed so that when the breast prosthesis is held against the patient at a preselected location, the protrusion will massage the preselected location, thereby encouraging circulation of interstitial lymph fluid,

wherein the protrusion member comprises a third layer flexible film that is sealed to the second layer of flexible film about the periphery so as to define a second chamber therebetween, the second chamber filled with a second gel, and

wherein the first gel and the second gel comprise cured silicone gel, and

wherein the second gel is cured so as to form the protrusion.

2. The breast prosthesis of claim 1, wherein the first layer of flexible film, the second layer of flexible film and the third layer of flexible film each comprise a polyurethane film.

3. The breast prosthesis of claim 2, wherein the first gel and the second gel comprise cured silicone gel.

4. The breast prosthesis of claim 1, wherein the protrusion member comprises a plurality of latitudinal ribs extending outwardly therefrom.

5. The breast prosthesis of claim 1, wherein the protrusion member comprises a plurality of ribs extending outwardly therefrom and that are arranged in a rayed pattern that issue from a central location.

6. The breast prosthesis of claim 1, wherein the protrusion member comprises a plurality of protrusions disposed so as to be configured to massage a patient's chest so as to encourage circulation of interstitial lymph fluid in an area of the patient's chest adjacent to the plurality of protrusions.

7. A breast prosthesis adapted to massage a patient's chest so as to encourage circulation of interstitial lymph fluid, comprising:

a. a breast form member having a front portion that has a shape corresponding to a human breast and a back por-

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tion, wherein the breast form member comprises a first layer of flexible film and a second layer of flexible film that is sealed to the first layer of flexible film about a periphery so as to define a first chamber therebetween, the first chamber being filled with a first gel; and

- b. a protrusion member extending from the back portion, the protrusion member defining at least one protrusion extending outwardly therefrom that is disposed so that when the breast prosthesis is held against the patient at a preselected location, the protrusion will massage the preselected location, thereby encouraging circulation of interstitial lymph fluid,

wherein the protrusion member comprises a third layer of flexible film that is sealed to the second layer of flexible film about the periphery so as to define a second chamber therebetween, the second chamber filled with a second gel, and

wherein the first gel has a first firmness and the second gel has a second firmness, and wherein the second firmness is firmer than the first firmness.

8. The breast prosthesis of claim 7, wherein the protrusion member comprises a plurality of latitudinal ribs extending outwardly therefrom.

9. The breast prosthesis of claim 7, wherein the protrusion member comprises a plurality of ribs extending outwardly therefrom and that are arranged in a rayed pattern that issue from a central location.

10. The breast prosthesis of claim 7, wherein the protrusion member comprises a plurality of protrusions disposed so as to be configured to massage a patient's chest so as to encourage circulation of interstitial lymph fluid in an area of the patient's chest adjacent to the plurality of protrusions.

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11. The breast prosthesis of claim 7, wherein the first layer of flexible film, the second layer of flexible film and the third layer of flexible film each comprise a polyurethane film.

12. The breast prosthesis of claim 11, wherein the first gel and the second gel comprise cured silicone gel.

13. A breast prosthesis adapted to massage a patient's chest so as to encourage circulation of interstitial lymph fluid, comprising:

a. a breast form member having a front portion that has a shape corresponding to a human breast and a back portion; and

b. a protrusion member extending from the back portion, the protrusion member defining at least one protrusion extending outwardly therefrom that is disposed so that when the breast prosthesis is held against the patient at a preselected location, the protrusion will massage the preselected location, thereby encouraging circulation of interstitial lymph fluid,

wherein the breast form member and the protrusion member are part of a single contiguous chamber.

14. The breast prosthesis of claim 13, wherein the protrusion member comprises a plurality of latitudinal ribs extending outwardly therefrom.

15. The breast prosthesis of claim 13, wherein the protrusion member comprises a plurality of ribs extending outwardly therefrom and that are arranged in a rayed pattern that issue from a central location.

16. The breast prosthesis of claim 13, wherein the protrusion member comprises a plurality of protrusions disposed so as to be configured to massage a patient's chest so as to encourage circulation of interstitial lymph fluid in an area of the patient's chest adjacent to the plurality of protrusions.

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