

A servant's heart

Kindful Hospice shines with compassion



Vanessa Rodriguez, RN, and Ryan Bell, Regional Director of Operations, are part of a hospice team providing palliative care at Kindful Hospice.

by James Coburn - staff writer

If you told Ryan Bell when he attended nursing school that he would be a hospice nurse, he would have thought you were "off your rocker".

Today, Bell is more than content and gratefully enriched by serving as the Regional Director of Operations at Kindful Hospice in Oklahoma City.

"Once I got into it, I fell in love with it," he said. "I wouldn't want to do anything different. I don't foresee myself ever going into any other line of nursing."

Bell earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism before switching careers. He has primarily worked in hospice for nine years since

graduating from nursing school from Metro Technology Center in Oklahoma City.

"We started Kindful about three years ago," Bell said of what was once a small mom-and-pop, pre-existing hospice in Norman and Ada with 11 patients.

Now Kindful Hospice has grown to serve nearly 300 hospice patients with comfort and compassion. Nobody is treated as a number at Kindful Hospice. Patients are treated like family.

OMRF scientist seeks functions of understudied genes



Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation scientist Gaurav Varshney, Ph.D.

With a new grant from the National Institutes of Health, an Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation scientist is zeroing in on an understudied set of genes believed to be involved in developmental disorders.

OMRF scientist Gaurav Varshney, Ph.D., received a one-year, \$175,000 pilot grant to study 21 genes implicated in conditions such as hearing loss, autism and schizophrenia.

"In the human genome, there are 20,000 to 25,000 protein-coding genes," said Varshney, who joined OMRF from the National Human Genome Research Institute at the NIH in 2017. "But only a fraction of these genes have been studied."

Scientists believe some 3,000 of our genes are susceptible to medication. Research so far has focused on less than a quarter of them.

To shine a light on these understudied pieces of our DNA, the NIH created the Illuminating the Druggable Genome program to prioritize the investigation of 300 genes scientists could develop treatments for if they knew more about them.

To examine these genes, researchers in Varshney's OMRF lab will use zebrafish, a paperclip-sized

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KINDFUL

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"We are one of the ones that actually do," he emphasized.

His staff are among the most compassionate people he has ever worked with. They give of themselves until one would think they have surpassed their energy level. But they give some more.

"They just pour into our patients an incredible amount of love and compassion towards them," Bell explained.

Hospice nurses work with what is perhaps the most vulnerable of patient populations. Case manager Vanessa Rodriguez, RN, keeps her spirit strong by having a good foundation with God. To give of oneself as a hospice nurse is totally fulfilling, she said.

"From my experience, we can help them get their wings. They get to meet Jesus — it's helping them up through the journey," Rodriguez said. "Taking care of them is really kind of self-care in itself because you get to spend that time with them, connecting with them, and making sure they're comfortable in the process."

She also makes sure to invest in activities that fulfill her soul such as hiking with her children. Recently, she has re-established exercise goals as key to stamina. And she is mindful of the need to be empathetic with family members and their loved ones in hospice. COVID-19 was a challenge for family members visiting loved ones outside a window of a long-term care facility. The nursing staff gave kindness so not to be a stranger sitting beside somebody taking their last breath, she said.

"For me it's having a strong faith and that's what helps me," Rodriguez said. "It's different for everyone, but I thank God every day for the opportunities to help his children."

Her grandma is what brought her to hospice. She had been working in intensive care units and cardiac. Rodriguez lost both her parents at a young age, so her grandmother was part of her core strength of inspiration. She was 99.

"When she got sick it was hard for me, and she had a hospice nurse — she had a light over her — and I thought that would be the most amazing thing to ever do," Rodriguez said. "And so, I jumped in — for me it was my grandma. She

just touched my life." What she reveres the most about Kindful Hospice is knowing patients and family members who open the door of acceptance for her to be part of their lives. Just walking along beside them in their journey is an opportunity to fortify faith.

"Some of them aren't believers, and that's fine. So just to help them with were they're comfortable is to learn something different about each one of them," she said. "It's something that helped me grow in just meeting them where they're at."

There are different variations among families. Not everyone is able to be with their dying family members when the final second comes. Every experience is different, and Kindful Hospice embraces the opportunity for the staff to give what is needed.

She is available to help educate the probable timeline when asked the toughest question: How long does mom have?

Rodriguez always tries to prepare family members to expect the unexpected, she said.

"We have a trajectory of knowing the signs and symptoms of what we are watching for. I always try to

over prepare versus under prepare. Sometimes you miss it, but you do your best."

Rodriguez tries not to compare patient to one another but individualizes their care plans to meet their needs.

It's helping each individual patient reach their end-of-life goal. Bereavement coordinators follow the patients' families for at least 13 months after their loved on passes away. No one is left alone.

An entire interdisciplinary team offers a circle of care, including doctors, nurses, CNAs, chaplains, social workers, and volunteers have one goal in mind.

"That is to provide the best care we possibly can to the people who are put in our path to care for," Bell said.

For more information about Kindful Hospice and Palliative and Virtual Care visit:

<https://kindfulhospice.com>.



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GENES

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fish. More than 80% of human genes known to be associated with human disease have a counterpart in zebrafish. Because the fish reproduce frequently, develop quickly and are transparent, scientists can easily monitor their developing cells and see in days what would take years to observe in humans.

Varshney and his team will use the gene-editing tool CRISPR/Cas9 to turn off individual genes in the tiny fish. Observing what happens when that single gene isn't working will give researchers clues about what it might affect in human development. It could also indicate what disorders might be treated by targeting it with medication.

"Unless we know a gene's function, we can't develop a drug to target it," said Varshney. "This work has potential to be expanded to all 300 of these genes and someday, we hope, lead to disease-modifying drugs."

The grant, R03 TR003694-01, is funded by the NIH Common Fund and the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences, a part of the NIH.

2021 ONA Annual Conference Set

2021 ONA Annual Conference & House of Delegates Meeting The Journey Before Us

The Oklahoma Nurses Association is pleased to present the 2021 ONA Convention at the Hyatt Regency Tulsa Downtown, Tulsa, Oklahoma, September 29-30, 2021.

The ONA Annual Convention theme, The Journey Before Us, is to focus on how we move forward on our journey exploring what lies ahead. How will we find a way to transcend the storm, not just survive it? How do we incorporate all that we have learned in the last year that makes us stronger and tougher and yet, still compassionate? Because it's the journey that makes us stronger, we want to learn something new with every step.

ONA has reserved a block of rooms at \$119.00 Single/Double, per night, plus taxes and fees. Reservations may be made online at: <https://www.hyatt.com/en-US/group-booking/TULRT/G-ONAC> or by calling (877) 803-7534 and referencing the ONA Annual Convention room block (ONAC). **Hotel Information: Hyatt Regency Tulsa, 100 E. Second Street, Tulsa, OK 74103**

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Questions? Please contact ONA at events@oklahomanurses.org or call 405.840.3476.

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CAREERS IN NURSING

LEADING BY ACTIONS, NOT JUST BY WORDS: GLADE AVENUE ASSISTED LIVING

By Vickie Jenkins, Staff Writer

Tucked away in a quiet neighborhood in Bethany, OK is Glade Avenue Assisted Living. Among the professional staff, is Kyla Fodje, LPN. "I enjoy working here. I have always been drawn to helping others and I can relate to our residents so well," Kyla said.

Kyla graduated from Francis Tuttle School of Technology, getting her nursing degree. She has worked at Glade Avenue for three years. When talking to Kyla, she mentioned some important people while in nursing school; two instructors that she looked up to. "My mentors were Mrs. Peterson, Mrs. George and a very good nurse friend of mine, Jennifer. They helped me through some of the toughest times," Kyla said.

Growing up in Northwest OKC, Kyla wanted to be a massage therapist. Looking to the future, Kyla plans on continuing her education to make that dream come

true. "Before becoming a nurse, I was a CNA for ten years and an Advanced Certified Medication Aide for four years. I think being a nurse and being in the medical field is the perfect job for me," she commented.

Kyla's typical day at work includes patient care and tending to every need. Kyla sees about sixty residents/patients a month. "Recently, my residents have enjoyed me giving them massages in my spare time to decrease their pain. It is very comforting to both of us knowing that I am helping them feel better."

What advice would you give to someone going into the medical field? "I would tell them to always be open to learn new things and leave work at work. When we care for people, it's easy to take work home with us but do what you can and don't be hard on yourself. Give yourself time to be with your

family."

Asking Kyla what her biggest reward as a nurse is, she replied, "The biggest reward as a nurse to me is the fact that I am helping others and working together as a team to make a difference in our residents lives; especially since with Covid 19, we were all residents since we were all on lockdown."

What is your biggest challenge in nursing? "The biggest challenge is getting out of my comfort zone and trusting myself enough to use my nursing judgement in critical situations," Kyla replied. "The residents and patients are depending on us," she added.

"My mother was the reason I actually got into the medical field. She told me it was God's Work. It was my mother and my husband that kept me going, encouraging me all the way. They were very supportive of me. Ever since I started taking care of people, I found that

my patience and willingness to help others has grown and continues to grow. When my mother got sick in 2016, I felt helpless and there wasn't much of anything I could do to help her; she ended up passing away. That is when I realized nursing was my calling and I had a deep desire to be there for someone; that is when I knew I would be a nurse," Kyla explained.

Kyla possesses all of the top qualities of a nurse; "Time management is a big one," Kyla said. "Compassion and being able to build a trust with the residents is very important. Continuing education opens the doors to many opportunities. With medical technology changing all the time, there is always something new to discover," Kyla commented.

Kyla considers herself a leader. "I am definitely a leader. I will

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FODJE

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always stand up and speak for what is right. I lead by actions, not just words," Kyla said with a smile.

A little about Kyla? Kyla is married and a mother to two sons, Jordan and Joel, Jr. "My family comes first. I love Jesus and making a difference in my community. I volunteer at churches, helping with yard work or kids services. My goals in life are very important to me and being able to give my children the life I never had. My husband and I are very family oriented. We are both nurses and want to create opportunities for people that come from low income families. One day, we hope to open our own free clinic to help minorities get in school, find work and get help with mental health issues. I want to be remembered for helping others and showing kindness in a hurting world," Kyla stated.

Summing up her life in three words, Kyla said, "Love Conquers all."

For more Information on Glade Avenue Assisted Living visit <https://www.gladeavenueassistedliving.com>



Caring for the residents/patients at Glade Avenue Assisted Living is Kyla Fodje, LPN. The sincere love and compassion is apparent.



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(AS PUBLISHED IN THE 2021 EDUCATION GUIDE TO NURSING)

OU leading nursing renaissance

As Covid-19 threatened nursing education in 2020, the collective minds at the University of Oklahoma Fran and Earl Ziegler College of Nursing decided to use the historic event as a learning tool.

From collecting Covid-19 swabs to administering vaccinations, OU's College of Nursing found a way for students to not only learn but be a part of the solution throughout the pandemic.

"Ever since last fall I've been talking about the clinical renaissance we can be a part of in nursing," said Senior Associate Dean Melissa Craft, PhD, APRN-CNS, AOCN, FAAN. "After the last great plague in the Middle Ages, there was a renaissance. My point all along has been how best to positively use this experience for the betterment of patients and for us as nurses."

The focus has not only been on students simply emerging from the pandemic but flourishing, armed with experience and a new set of skills.

From a nursing education standpoint, the pandemic has taught a number of lessons.

"Going back to Florence Nightingale, formalized nursing was birthed because of a war and nurses' responses in stepping into that situation," said Craft. "Florence Nightingale was a scientist, she was an advocate for social justice, a leader in healthcare management, and at the core, she was dedicated to individual flourishing."

"To me (what the pandemic) has taught us as a college is what we do as nurses is infinitely needed. What the pandemic has taught everyone is the knowledge and skill of nursing as scientists, as advocates, as leaders in healthcare management, and at their core, dedicated to human flourishing is incredibly essential in our society."

The pandemic not only

validated to Craft that what is currently being done to prepare nurses for their profession needs to continue, but it also allowed introspection and an opportunity to revisit if the profession is doing everything it can as a science and advocate for social justice.

The pandemic also served to further highlight the underlying disparities in our healthcare system.

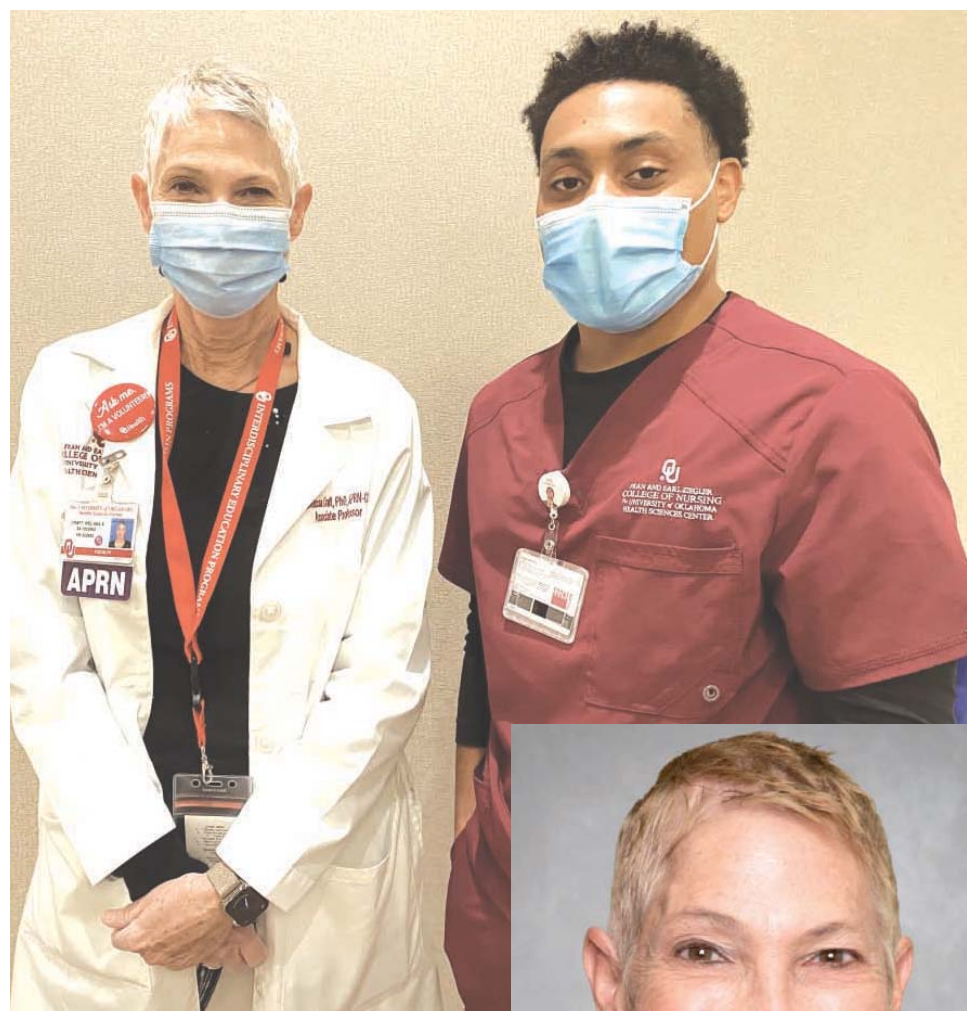
"As nurses, as nursing students, and as a college we can't be blind to that," Craft said. "We really have to look at it as an opportunity. Again it's the renaissance which was all about going back into learning, wisdom, discovery and exploration."

As in-person nursing education ground to a halt around the country, the OU College of Nursing sought out opportunities to engage students and help them learn during these unprecedented times.

One of those opportunities came out of the Swab Pods, where students staffed Covid-19 testing stations in Oklahoma City and Tulsa.

The students loved it, especially in a time where they were taken out of face-to-face classroom and the clinical learning settings.

"The core of what nurses do is they lean into situations," Craft said. "It's like firefighters run into a burning building, nurses run into taking care of people. When we started looking at (the swab pods) it was clinical, it was community and reaching out to where our community needs us. It was sort of a rethinking of what it does mean to do clinical work. It doesn't all have to happen in an acute care setting. In fact, we need to recognize that 'the majority of patients' lives don't occur in an acute-care setting.' Therefore we need to be where the patients are and our



Dr. Melissa Craft and OU student Romalace Jenkins serve at a community vaccination clinic.

students need to learn where the patients are.

The university also leveraged its partnerships with OU Health as well as the Oklahoma City County Health Department and the Oklahoma City VA Health Care System to identify other student learning opportunities.

"What we've done as a college is to look at every opportunity not to continue what we've always done but ascertain what the OU



Dr. Melissa Craft is helping lead the OU College of Nursing's education renaissance.

College of Nursing can do now to make a difference," she said.

For more information visit: <https://nursing.ouhsc.edu/>



OU Nursing – Advancing Health Sooner



Highlights:

- Celebrating 110 years of nursing excellence – founded 1911
- Nationally ranked by U.S. News & World Report
- Students, faculty, and staff engaged in COVID-19 initiatives
- Advanced Practice Board Certification and NCLEX pass rates exceed state and national averages
- Clinical practice and research mentoring across Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral programs
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OU College of Allied Health Programs Earn National Rankings

U.S. News & World Report has cited four degree programs offered by the University of Oklahoma College of Allied Health as among the best educational programs nationally. The rankings recognize top schools for training at the master and/or doctorate levels. Each school's score reflects average rating based on a survey of academics at peer institutions.

OU College of Allied Health programs ranked by the national publication are:

Audiology: Ranked 36th in the nation. Audiologists are experts in the diagnosis and treatment of disorders of hearing and balance. Professionals with the Doctor of Audiology degree work in a variety of settings, including hospitals, clinics, academic institutions and private practices.

Physical Therapy: Ranked 42nd. Physical therapy is a rehabilitation field focused on improving quality of life through prescribed exercise, hands-on care, and patient education. Physical therapists are movement experts who examine, evaluate, and treat injuries, disabilities, or other health conditions, including nerve and muscle function, posture, balance and pain disorders for individuals of all ages.

Occupational Therapy: Ranked 58th. Occupational therapy is a rehabilitation field that maximizes performance in everyday activities such as self-care, home management, work, school and leisure for people across the lifespan. Occupational therapists evaluate and treat motor, visual, cognitive and psychological deficits, and innovatively modify tasks and environments that support participation in life activities.

Speech-Language Pathology: Ranked 63rd in the nation. Training in speech-language pathology prepares professionals to assist adults and children with disorders of speech, language and swallowing. This high-demand and fast-growing profession includes professionals in a wide range of work settings, including clinics, hospitals and school systems.

Jane Wilson, Ph.D., dean of the OU College of Allied Health, said "The acknowledgement by an external entity of the outstanding quality of our programs and the faculty and staff who support those programs is gratifying. We are confident that our college community will be able to continue the excellent work and learning that places us in the top tier of programs nationally."

In addition to programs recently recognized by U.S. News & World Report, the college, which is located on the OU Health Sciences Center campus in Oklahoma City, serves as the academic unit for programs in communication sciences and disorders, dietetics, nuclear medicine, nutritional sciences, radiation sciences, radiation therapy, radiography, rehabilitation sciences and sonography. Its 19 programs include seven at the baccalaureate level, 11 at the master or doctoral level and one certificate program. The college also offers several web-based degree programs and expanded its accredited professional-entry programs in occupational therapy, physical therapy and sonography at the OU-TU School of Community Medicine in Tulsa.



OU Public Health Dean Part of Research Team to Publish Major Study

A research study published today in the prestigious New England Journal of Medicine shows tremendous promise for a new drug to prevent and treat blood clots. Gary Raskob, Ph.D., Dean of the Hudson College of Public Health at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, is a member of the leading research team and an author of the publication.

The study was done in patients having knee replacement surgery, and compared a new anti-clotting drug, called abelacimab, with the drug currently given for clot prevention in those patients, called enoxaparin. The results are extremely promising: Patients who received abelacimab saw an 80% reduction in blood clots and had a low risk of bleeding. That's good news for the future of clot prevention.

"While we have good medications to prevent clotting, the main side effect is bleeding complications," Raskob said. "Researchers have been searching for new drugs that remain effective at preventing clots, but cause less bleeding. This is an exciting step toward that goal."

Although patients undergoing various types of surgeries face a risk of blood clots, this study focused on knee replacement surgery. These patients have a high risk of developing clots in the deep veins of their legs, which could then travel to the lungs and prove fatal, if they don't receive preventive medication. Current drugs like enoxaparin decrease the risk of clots, but increase the odds of bleeding, which could cause an infection in the wound or more serious complications like gastrointestinal or brain bleeding.

The new drug being studied, abelacimab, is a monoclonal antibody and takes a different approach to clot prevention. Blood clotting at the wound site naturally activates during surgery as a step toward healing, especially during an extensive procedure like knee replacement. Clotting itself is a series of complex reactions involving proteins in the blood. One of those proteins, called Factor XI, has begun to stand out to researchers because people who are deficient in Factor XI tend to



Gary Raskob, Ph.D.

have less spontaneous bleeding and a lower chance of developing clots later in life. People with inherited Factor XI deficiency, known as hemophilia C, don't have spontaneous major bleeding complications compared to people with other types of hemophilia.

"This suggested to us that if we reduce Factor XI, we could prevent clots without increasing bleeding complications," Raskob said. "Abelacimab works by binding to the Factor XI protein in the blood and preventing it from being activated during the clotting sequence."

The highest risk for blood clots is typically within two weeks after knee replacement surgery, Raskob said. Study participants who received abelacimab had lower levels of Factor XI at 30 days, suggesting a longer period of protection.

"Patients who undergo surgery for hip replacement or removal of cancer have a risk for clots out to one month," Raskob said. "This study shows that abelacimab has the potential to be effective during the period of time post-operatively when people are at greatest risk."

The study tested three different doses of abelacimab; the two higher doses were most effective in reducing clots and will be studied in larger research trials to come. Raskob will continue to be involved in these studies, which may include OU Health patients in the future.

SITUATION UPDATE: COVID-19

COVID-19 Cases	471,176
New Cases	1,194
New Cases 7 day Average	938
Active Cases	7,302
CDC/NCHS Provisional Deaths	8,689
Acute Care OSDH Licensed Facilities/Location**	Recent 3 day Ave. Hospitalizations Cases (ICU)
Region 1 (NW)	10 (6)
Region 2 (NE)	48 (12)
Region 3 (SW)	23 (5)
Region 4 (EC)	25 (7)
Region 5 (SE)	17 (3)
Region 6 (Central)	26 (9)
Region 7 (Tulsa)	214 (79)
Region 8 (OKC)	107 (28)
Total	470* (149)
Other Types of Facilities	
Focus Facilities	11 (6)
Rehabilitation Facilities	0 (0)
Tribal Facilities	14 (4)
Other Facilities Total	25 (10)

*Includes 29 pediatric hospitalizations.

**Focus, Rehabilitation and Tribal Facilities numbers are not assigned to a specific region as their patient populations reside across the state. Information provided through survey of Oklahoma hospitals as reported to HHS as of the time of this report. Response rate affects data. Facilities may update previously reported information as necessary.

Data Source: Acute Disease Service, Oklahoma State Department of Health. *As of 2021-07-23 at 7:00 a.m.



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Meet the Maddox family. Their thirteen-year-old daughter, SaNiyah, has cerebral palsy and is confined to a wheelchair. SaNiyah's entire life – her happiness, her health, her every need – all depends on her family and help from the team at Special Care. But they also have two adorable young sons, demanding jobs and – on top of everything else – they foster an infant who needed a home, too. It's more than most of us could handle.

But here's the big surprise. The Maddoxes not only receive help from United Way agencies, they find room in a budget stretched to its limit and they give to the United Way. **Can you?**

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