

Patients' perceptions on the attire of medical students and its associated factors in the medical wards of Teaching Hospital Jaffna

S. Madhubhashini¹, S. Piranavan¹, T. Sivarajah¹, S. Kumaran², B. Kumarendran²

¹*Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna*

²*Department of Community and Family Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna*

Background and objective: Attire, crucial to personality building, affects the doctor-patient interaction. This study aims to describe perceptions on the attire of medical students and the factors associated with these perceptions among patients in medical wards of Teaching Hospital Jaffna.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 426 patients (≥ 18 years) selected using stratified random sampling from 3 medical units of Teaching Hospital Jaffna from September to November 2019. Data were collected using an interviewer-administered questionnaire, consisting of images to assess perceptions. Responses were recorded on a Likert scale (1 very inappropriate – 5 very appropriate) and 'I like it', 'I don't like it' and 'no idea' options were added to obtain a composite score. Descriptive and inferential statistics were performed using SPSS.

Results: Mean age of participants was 39.1 (± 15.4) years; 49.3% were females. The majority assigned 'I like it' for official shoes, clean shave, plain shirt, light coloured shirt, closed upper buttons, and tucked in shirts for males; sandals and braided hair for females; and name tag for both. The majority marked 'I don't like it' for unbuttoned coats, tucked out shirt, open upper buttons, shiny colour shirts, unruly beard, slippers, and high heels. Attires with white-coats scored higher than similar attires without white-coats across the various types of attires. Majority ranked shirt and trousers with white coat for males and sari with white coat for females as very appropriate. Similarly, t-shirts and jeans for males and skirt and blouse for females were ranked as very inappropriate by the majority. Composite scores for attire, and responses for selected aspects of attire were associated with age group, past encounter with medical students, and sex.

Conclusion: Age group, past encounter with medical students and sex influence patients' perceptions of medical student attire. White coats were preferred irrespective of attire.

Keywords: Medical Students' Attire, Patient Perceptions, Jaffna