



Dress Code for Students in Dental Colleges

Eva Goyal^{1*} and Esha Goyal²

¹*Desh Bhagat Dental College and Hospital, Muktsar, Punjab, India.*

²*Gian Sagar Dental College and Hospital, Banur, Punjab, India.*

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author Eva Goyal designed the study and wrote the protocol. Author Esha Goyal wrote the first draft of the manuscript and managed the literature searches. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Article Information

DOI: 10.9734/JAMMR/2017/34771

Editor(s):

(1) James Anthony Giglio, Adjunct Clinical Professor of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, School of Dentistry, Virginia Commonwealth University, Virginia, USA.

Reviewers:

(1) Dheeraj Kalra, YMT Dental College & Hospital, India.

(2) Mohil Asnani, Gujarat University, India.

(3) Anirudh Bhattacharya, Narayana Hospital, India.

Complete Peer review History: <http://www.science domain.org/review-history/19886>

Opinion Article

Received 10th June 2017

Accepted 28th June 2017

Published 6th July 2017

ABSTRACT

“The joy of dressing is an art”.

Clothing affects several kinds of judgments people make. A positive self-image defines character, boosts self-confidence, expresses individuality, portrays social status, and supplies the satisfaction of dressing according to one's beliefs and culture. With some colleges asking students “to wear dignity on their sleeves”, we have tried to decode the dress code.

Keywords: Dress code; dignity; individuality; social status.

Doctors are an integral part of the society. Rendering satisfactory services to the individual and community has always been the motto of doctors all over the nation. Thus, any issue related to them has a direct effect on the society and hence has always been debatable.

The issue of dress code in dental colleges has emerged as one of the hottest issues of debate at present. As controversial as it is, it is not possible to resolve it entirely to everybody's satisfaction. This issue, as many others, has two sides to it. On a positive note regulating a dress code for students can be a step in the right

*Corresponding author: E-mail: Drevia12@gmail.com;

direction. Regulation of a rigid dress code has its own merits. Neatly and conservatively dressed doctors are always welcomed by patients. It helps develop the patient's faith in his doctor [1]. Not many people would relish getting treated by a dentist with eyebrows pierced and sporting torn jeans with scruffy shoes. Flashy clothes make the dentist look like a neon sign.

Most of the patient's do not feel comfortable approaching a dentist attired in a midriff baring shirt or a short skirt. The so called designer wear make the doctors look more like models than the health professionals they are. Unkempt, dirty hair, colored pink would definitely make the patient see red when approaching a doctor. A three day old beard and long hair to achieve an unshaven macho look would never give the patient a good impression of the doctor [2]. A patient's faith and rapport with a dentist is of utmost importance for successful treatment to be provided. No patient in his right mind would like to be treated by a doctor with an unkempt look. Untucked shirts and unbuttoned sleeves should be a strict no-no. Not only do these play havoc with a professional attitude but also wreck the infection control regimen [3]. Unpinned long hair falling in the patient's mouth during treatment can be a major source of infection. Hair falling all over the eyes and face not only looks highly unprofessional but also reduces the efficiency and credibility of the dentist. A patient's trust in a dentist is increased when the dentist is observed to be clean and have a professional appearance. They will be more compliant and return for future care, consequently the practice will grow and succeed [4,5]. Secondly, enforcing a dress code can help hide economic disparity among students. Branded shirts and trousers can no longer be displayed as a sign of strong financial hold. It decreases staff judgments about another team member's appearance and the tension that results. Thus enforcing a dress code helps instill a professional attitude in the students. In addition, visitors from other countries who come to India for treatment and observe and receive a highly professional quality care will come away with a positive view of the students as well as the school.

On the other hand others advocate for a freedom of choice regarding how they dress. Every individual should have the right to dress according to his/her own mind and whims.

Enforcing a uniform dress code restricts the student's freedom of expression. Also, each and every individual has his own sense of comfort. Comfort during clinical hours can increase the efficiency of the dentist [6,7]. No dentist would want to waste time adjusting her dupatta or head cover during treatment. Clothes such as salwar and the like can hinder movement and reduce efficiency [6].

A rigid dress code also interferes with the religious practices of several orthodox sects. Burkas are a necessary part of dress for orthodox Muslims.

Also, the head covering required for Sikhs interferes with the dress requirements in operating theatres. Thus just regulating a dress code without consideration of religious practices is incorrect and unacceptable.

The dental colleges and universities award admission on the basis of merit and overall personality. Uniforms are for schools, not colleges. Most of the students gaining admission have already finished at least ten years of wearing uniforms to school. Requiring them to wear uniforms in college can retard their personal development. Those who protest dress codes also argue that students admitted to professional colleges are in their late teens and have sense enough to dress neatly and in accordance with their professional status. Moreover, many colleges in India have international recognition and fame and have received approval from the dental council. Such institutions should at least be trusted to instill enough professionalism in their students to be able to dress properly [8,9]. Any university unable to teach its students the required mannerisms for professional courses does not deserve the stamp of approval from the dental council. Providing only academic information is not enough for the education of a "complete" health care professional.

Thus enforcement of a rigid dress code is a double edged sword. Uniform enforcement, within certain limits, can definitely have beneficial effects. However, this major decision should be made after accurately weighing both the pros and cons. While it can certainly help project a more professional outlook it can, at the same time, sacrifice the right to dress according to one's own desire. A decision acceptable to all should be taken. The most important aspect of dental education is to develop highly professional

as well as skilled practitioners. This should remain to be the top and foremost priority and nothing should be done to compromise it. Not now, not ever.

Suggested Dress Code Regulations [10]

- Hair must be clean and tidy. Long fringes or wispy locks of hair must be secured away from the face. Long pony tails must be secured in a way to avoid hair falling over the shoulder. Unusual styles, over the top colors or excessive hair gel are not acceptable. Facial stubble and unkempt hair should be avoided.
- Nails must be clean, short and manicured. Nail paint or nail art should be avoided. All rings and wrist jewelry must be removed before entering a clinic.
- Clinic coats must be worn at all times. Ensure that the coats are clean and ironed. Shirt sleeves and tails should not be visible. Ensure all the buttons are secured, including those across the shoulder and neck.
- Trousers are the preferred attire. They should be straight legged and shoe length. Shorts, cargo pants, jeans or jogging pants should not be acceptable [9,10].
- Shoes must be enclosed, made of a non-porous material with little or no heel and must be rubber soled/ non slip. The front of the shoe must completely cover the top of the foot.
- Dental students should avoid wearing loose flowing clothes, which could be caught in machinery. If loose clothing is worn it should be properly pinned or tied up. This includes ties, long cuffs and head gear.
- When wearing a protective mask it must be secured either by the elastic loops around the ears or firmly tied at the back of the head. Masks should not be worn under the nose or chin.

CONSENT

It is not applicable.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

It is not applicable.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

REFERENCES

1. Dunn JJ, Lee TH, Percelay JM, Fitz JG, Goldman L. Patient and house officer attitudes on physician attire and etiquette. *JAMA*. 1987;257:65-8.
2. Menahem S, Shvartzman P. Is our appearance important to our patients? *Fam Pract*. 1998;15:391-7.
3. Shulman ER, Brehm WT. Dental clinical attire and infection-control procedures: Patients' attitudes. *J Am Dent Assoc*. 2001;132:508-16.
4. Gary LB, Richmond J. The White - coat effect: Physician attire and perceived authority, friendliness and attractiveness. *J Appl Soc Psychol*. 2004;34:2469-81.
5. Sudhir KM, Mohan GC, Fareed N, Shanthi M. Dental students' perception towards dress code in a private dental institution in Andhra Pradesh: A cross-sectional study. *J Educ Ethics Dent*. 2011;1:68-72.
6. Clement RGE. Is it time for evidence based uniform for doctors? *BMJ*. 2012; 345:e8286.
7. Erik AA. A pre-design study of patient and medical professional attitudes and reactions towards the colour of medical scrubs. DMFA Thesis. The Ohio State University; 2008.
8. Mistry D, Tahmasebi JF. Children's and parents' attitudes towards dentists' attire. *Eur Arch Paediatr Dent*. 2009;10:237-40.
9. Oxotoby K. Scrubs, suit, or jeans—what should doctors wear to work? *BMJ Careers*, 21 July; 2015.
10. McKenna G, Lillywhite GR, Maini N. Patient preferences for dental clinical attire: A cross-sectional survey in a dental hospital. *Br Dent J*. 2007;203:681-5.

© 2017 Goyal and Goyal; This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Peer-review history:
The peer review history for this paper can be accessed here:
<http://sciencedomain.org/review-history/19886>