



Policy Name: UGME Dress Code Policy

Approved By: MDCM Program Committee

Approved On: May 27, 2019

Pertinent to: Students, residents, faculty

Purpose: Describe the expected dress code for students in contact with patients.

Background

The way students present themselves to patients demonstrates respect for the intimacy afforded to them as physicians-in-training. Illness is a stressful event for patients and families, and an appropriate appearance contributes to patient confidence. Therefore, the UGME Office and its affiliated hospitals have a dress code for courses that include patient contact (e.g., Physicianship, Longitudinal Family Medicine Experience, Transition to Clinical Practice and Clerkship).

Our healthcare setting is diverse. Because of a diverse range of appropriate fashion choices, different healthcare delivery contexts (such as adult inpatient units, pediatric inpatient units, clinics and operating rooms) and varied opinions amongst community members, professional attire can be difficult to succinctly describe. Physicians and physicians-in-training work with the entire population, across cultural and economic lines. As such it may be prudent to consider minimizing displays of wealth (such as expensive jewelry, watches or clothes), in order to allow patients to feel at ease. In the same way that hand hygiene is important, students should also dress in a way that minimizes the risk of spreading pathogens from person-to-person.

The 2019 update to this Dress Code Policy was led by the Medical Student Society (MSS) Equity Committee and endorsed by the Committee on Medical Education Governance (C-MEG).

Policy

1. Students must wear their hospital ID badge (when in a hospital setting) or nametag at all times, in respect of patients' rights.
2. Students should be well-groomed, clean, and respect the following guidelines:

- **Clothing:** Clothing should be appropriate for a workplace. Students should wear clothes that are comfortable, practical, neat, and clean. Professionalism in dress can have different standards depending on the context, but “business casual” garments such as button-down shirts, polos, blouses, sweaters, cardigans, pants, slacks, skirts, and dresses generally are appropriate. The use of short sleeves and the adoption of a “bare below the elbow” approach is encouraged where appropriate. Legs should be covered to the knee. Chests should not be visible. Often the standards for a particular location will be apparent from the outfits worn by other team members. Students may gauge whether more informal garments such as jeans or shorts are appropriate depending on the team and situation.
 - **Shoes:** Footwear should be professional and comfortable (sneakers, especially not too flashy, are appropriate). Closed toes are required where there is exposure to sharps or body fluids (most hospital and clinic settings).
 - **Accessories:** Ties, rings, and other hand and wrist accessories should be considered as extra vectors for microbes and possible sources of infection. The use of jewelry other than watches and wedding rings should be avoided as they hamper proper hand hygiene. Fake nails should not be used as they prevent proper hand hygiene. In surgical rotations, nail polish may not be allowed, or it may need to be free of chips, depending on local policy.
 - **Grooming:** Students are often intimately in the personal space of another person. Therefore, aspects of one’s personal grooming that impact a patient’s comfort should be taken into consideration: fingernails should be relatively short (otherwise palpation can be painful for the patient), long hair should be tied back, and perfume should be avoided due to allergies.
 - **White Coats:** White coats should be kept clean and washed frequently. Students should bring their white coats at the beginning of every rotation, as these are often worn. In some environments, a white coat can be seen as an unnecessary barrier between patients and health care professionals. Supervisors will indicate to students when it is inappropriate to wear a white coat.
 - **Scrubs:** Scrubs are the property of the hospital and should not be worn outside.
3. It is not appropriate for a preceptor / supervisor to shame or embarrass a trainee in front of patients or peers. If a student’s attire is deemed inappropriate based on this this policy, the supervisor should first kindly and privately direct the student to the dress code policy and may require the student to change. If a student’s attire is repeatedly in conflict with this policy, the supervisor should bring this to the attention of the site director or course director, who will address it privately with the student. Further dress code policy conflicts may result in a documented professionalism lapse, as detailed in the UGME Policy on [Student Professional Behaviours](#).