

Effect of attire and appearance of a paediatrician on parents

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Abstract

Objective: To study the ideas of parents about dressing and attire of the paediatrician.

Design: Cross-sectional study.

Subjects: We recruited 400 indoor patients admitted at paediatrics department (Parents/guardians were the respondent for the questions asked) from the tertiary care teaching hospital. We obtained a written informed consent as we approach the subjects. After obtaining the consent subjects was provided with the questionnaire Performa and responses were noted.

Main outcome measures: parents'/guardians' and response to the questions and analyse their opinion regarding attire and appearance of paediatricians.

Results: Most of the parents recommended traditional dresses, favourably with suits and tie, they prefer full sleeve apron along with stethoscope and name plate, there is favourable response for wearing jeans and sleeveless, which is in contrast with previous views of traditional dressing, but T-shirts are still less preferred as are very colourful fancy dresses.

Conclusions: Parents prefer their Paediatrician to wear formal dresses along with apron and some conservative items; however they are now liberal for jeans and sleeveless which saws changed views of parents along with changes in fashion over a period of time.

Keywords: attire, appearance, paediatrician, parents

Introduction

First impressions can have a great impact. How a doctor dresses may be important in determining the success of the patient-doctor relationship ^[1]. Attire and appearance of paediatrician play an important role in the development of faith and respect in children and parents. They might regard formally dressed doctors as competent and casually dressed doctors as incompetent ^[2]. Doctors' attire has been modified by tradition and fashion over period of time. The past decades have seen major changes to the medical work-environment and to societal expectations that have led to changes in doctors' choice of dress.

It is the getting away from medical paternalism that has resulted in fewer doctors choosing the traditional white coat. Overall, doctors' dress styles have become less formal than in previous decades.

Most of the previous studies have emphasised on white coats. In an Indian study, Raichur *et al* ^[3]. Studied the parents' and guardians' opinion regarding paediatricians' appearance. As fashion changes opinions of people also changes. More contemporary views are needed. Furthermore, very few studies have focused at clothing options other than white apron. Style of dress may depend on the work culture of an institution. Doctors may also dress in a way that is acceptable to their patients, and it is likely that patient dresses to please their doctors.

These complex interactions can result in new doctors becoming unclear about best practice, and for a paediatrician it's difficult to decide between some semiformal or fashioned dressing and formal clothes.

We have conducted a study regarding ideas and attitude of parents over appearance and attire of a paediatrician.

As today's generations is more open minded and have trend to wear more fashioned dresses, outcome of this study may help upcoming generation of paediatricians regarding their appearance in front of patient and their parents.

Methodology

We recruited the patients (age up to 12 years) admitted at paediatrics department of the tertiary care teaching hospital. Parents were respondents for the questionnaire.

Total 400 subjects were involved in study.

We obtained a written informed consent as we approached the subjects.

After obtaining the consent subjects were asked the questionnaire Performa (given below) and response was noted. Other baseline information of the patients was also noted as per Performa. A total of responses to each question were analysed.

Result

Table 1a: For both male and female doctors

Sr No.	Question	Parent's response (n = 400)	
		Yes (%)	No (%)
1	What do you think should a Paediatrician always wear white apron or not?	364 (91.0)	36 (9.0)
2	Does wearing apron by doctor makes it fearful for children to be examined?	194 (48.5)	206 (51.5)
3	Do you avoid examination by a doctor wearing apron?	49 (12.25)	351 (87.75)
4	Do you think your doctor is less qualified if he/she is not wearing apron?	238 (59.5)	162 (40.5)
5	Is it okay if your doctor is not wearing apron?	126 (31.5)	274 (68.5)
6	Should a paediatrician recommended to have stethoscope always with him/her?	376 (94.0)	24 (6.0)
7	Should a Doctor always wear Name Plate?	244 (61.0)	156 (39.0)
8	Do you prefer a Paediatrician with clean shaved more than a bearded?	313 (78.25)	87 (21.75)

Table 1b: For male doctors

Sr No.	Question	Parent's response (n = 400)	
		Yes (%)	No (%)
1	Do you think that it will be more impressive if a Paediatrician wear Shirt rather than T-shirt?	333 (83.25)	67 (16.75)
2	Is it okay for you, if your Paediatrician wears colourful dresses in clinics?	65 (16.25)	335(83.75)
3	Do you think that it will be more impressive if a Paediatrician wear Suit and tie, instead of wearing shirt only without Suit and tie?	321 (80.25)	79 (19.75)
4	Is it Okay if your Paediatrician wears Jeans rather than formals?	292 (73.0)	108 (27.0)
5	Should a Paediatrician wear Spectacles in clinics?	30 (7.5)	370 (92.5)
6	Is it Okay if your paediatrician wears chappals instead of Shoes?	121 (30.25)	279 (69.75)
7	Do you prefer your Paediatrician to have "In shirt"?	318 (79.5)	82 (20.5)

Table 1c: For female doctors

Sr No.	Question	Parent's response (n = 400)	
		Yes (%)	No (%)
1	Should a Doctor compulsorily oil His/her Hair?	175 (43.75)	225 (56.25)
2	Should paediatrician apply lipstick in clinics??	21 (5.25)	379 (94.75)
3	Should paediatrician wear fancy jewellery?	18 (4.5)	382 (95.5)
4	Should paediatrician wear jeans?	152 (38.0)	248 (62.0)
5	Should paediatrician wear t shirt?	75 (18.75)	325 (81.25)
6	Should paediatrician wear sleeveless wardrobe?	170 (42.5)	230 (57.5)
7	Should paediatrician wear skin-tight wardrobe?	33 (8.25)	367 (91.75)
8	Is it okay if a Doctor does fancy hair style, like spike, coloured, or long hair?	19 (4.75)	381 (95.25)
9	Is it acceptable if a Female Doctor has Multiple Ear Piercing and Ear rings within them?	134 (33.5)	266 (66.5)
10	Will you hesitate to have your child being examined by a Doctor having Tattoos over body?	130 (32.5)	270 (67.5)
11	Will you like if your Doctor applies perfume while in Clinics?	183 (45.75)	217 (54.25)
12	Will it be better if your Doctor examine your child while different types of toys put on the table?	379 (94.75)	21 (5.25)

Total 400 patient's parents were included in study, most of parents (91%) think that their paediatrician should always wear a white apron, 48.5% parents believes that wearing an apron makes it fearful for the child to be examined, and yet only 12.25% parents thinks to avoid examination by a doctor wearing apron. Among these subjects, 59.5% parents thinks that their doctor is less qualified if he/she is not wearing apron, for 31.5% parents it is okay if their doctor doesn't wear an apron.

Ninety four percent parents recommended their paediatrician to have a stethoscope always with them, 61% parents recommended to wear name plate.

Among these parents 78.25% parents prefers their paediatrician being clean shaved rather than bearded, 83.25% parents thinks that wearing a Shirt rather than T-shirt will be more impressive for their paediatrician, 83.75% parents not recommended their doctor to wear colourful dresses in clinics, 80.25% parents thinks that it will be more impressive to wear Suit and tie, instead of wearing shirt only without Suit and tie, for 73% parents it is okay if their paediatrician wears jeans instead of formals.

Out of all, 92.5% parents recommended their paediatrician, not to wear spectacles in clinics, for 30.25% parents it is okay their paediatrician wears chappals instead of shoes, 79.5% parents prefers their paediatrician to have "in shirt".

Regarding hair, only 43.75% parents thinks that their female paediatrician should compulsorily oil their hair, only 5.25% parents recommended their female doctor to apply lipstick, 95.5% parents recommended, not to wear fancy jewellery, only 38% parents recommended their paediatrician to wear jeans, only 18.75% parents recommended to wear T-shirts, 42.5% parents recommended to wear sleeveless, 91.75% parents recommended their paediatrician, not to wear skin tight wardrobe, 95.25% parents recommended their doctor not to do fancy hair style, 66.5% parents recommended not to have multiple ear piercing and wear ear rings, 32.5% parents said that they will hesitate to have their child being examined by a doctor having tattoos over body, 54.25% parents recommended their doctor, not to apply perfume, 94.75% parents recommended their doctor to examine child while different types of toys put on the table.

Table 2a: Male Doctor's Clothing

Code	Sex - Male	Parent's response (n = 400)	
		No.	(%)
A	Salwar-Kamiz	3	(0.75)
B	Shirt-Pent	370	(92.5)
C	Jeans-T-shirt	6	(1.5)
D	Shirt-Jeans	21	(5.25)
Total		400	

Table 2b: Female Doctor's Clothing

Code	Sex - Female	Parent's response (n = 400)	
		No.	(%)
A	Saari	167	(41.75)
B	Dress	221	(55.25)
C	T-shirt-Pent	12	(3.0)
Total		400	

Table 3: Doctor's Footwear

Code	Options	Parent's response (n = 400)	
		No.	(%)
A	Mojdi	15	(3.75)
B	Party Shoes	332	(83.0)
C	Chappal	20	(5.0)
D.	Sandle	33	(8.25)
Total		400	

Table 4: Doctor's Apron

Code	Options	Parent's response (n = 400)	
		No.	(%)
A	Full Sleeve	160	(40.0)
B	Half Sleeve	32	(8.0)
C	Up to Knee	156	(39.0)
D	Up to Waist	52	(13.0)
Total		400	

Table 5: Doctors' necktie

Code	Options	Parent's response (n = 400)	
		No.	(%)
A	Simple Plain-Single coloured	238	(59.5)
B	with Lining	146	(36.5)
C	with Small Dots	14	(3.5)
D.	with Cartoons	1	(0.25)
E.	Red or High Coloured	1	(0.25)
Total		400	

Amongst all 92.5% parents recommended to wear Shirt-Pent for male doctors, and 55.25% parents recommended to wear dress for female doctors, 83% parents recommended to wear party shoes, 40% parents recommended the Doctor's white apron to be of full sleeve, 59.5% parents recommended ties for the suit to be simple, plain, single coloured, 57% parents recommended their doctors to wear leather belt - black or brown coloured wrist watch.

Table 6: Doctor's Wrist Watch

Code	Options	Parent's response (n = 400)	
		No.	(%)
A	Metallic- Golden or Silver	143	(35.75)
B	Colourful Plastic	7	(1.75)
C	Leather belt with Black or Brown Colour	228	(57.0)
D.	Colourful or with Light	4	(1.0)
E.	It's Okay if Doctor doesn't wear Wrist-watch	18	(4.5)
Total		400	

Discussion

Doctor's appearance has been a topic of interest to medical historians. In a study by Barrett and Booth^[2], large number of children and parents rated doctor's dress as very important and children regarded doctors as the competent one who were formally dressed and casually dressed doctors as incompetent. Marino *et al*^[4], reported that parents had strong preference for formally dressed paediatrician and McCarthy *et al*^[5], had shown that majority of children preferred their doctors in white coat. Gierdingen *et al*^[6], found that positive responses from patients and physicians were associated with traditional items of dress and negative responses were associated with casual items of dress.

A study of patients in Saudi Arabia in 2012 found that 85% preferred that their physician wear a white coat, much more so than even traditional Saudi attire (9.7%)^[7]. Also in 2012, in Italy, where fashion is somewhat of a big deal (headquarters of many fashion brands), a study of physician appearance indicated that Italian patients have a need for a "simple and sober professional image of their physician," which includes attention to detail in personal grooming, conservative items and a white coat^[8]. The Japanese also prefer that physicians wear a white coat,^[9] specifically a clean one. Iranians like doctors in white coats as well^[10]. Hawaiians apparently do not like their doctors to wear casual attire to an "extreme," that is they do not take it easy to physicians in shorts and slippers, despite whatever they may be wearing. That same study in Hawaii also showed that patients preferred physicians wearing white coats. The Australians chime in: white coats are still revered by some,^[11] even if the doctors do not want to wear them^[12], due to some concern about discomfort as weather is Hot there, after all. In a paediatric emergency department in Cincinnati in 1995, parents stated a preference for their children's doctors to wear white coats but not tennis shoes^[15]. In our study also, 91% parents recommended to wear a white apron.

In Canada, white coats do not scare children^[13] this is in contrast to our study where it is found that 48.5% parents are of view that their children are afraid of white apron. Canadian children do not, however, like doctors in standard precaution attire^[14]. That brings up views of alien abduction, needles, and probing.

White coats and ties can serve as fomites or vectors. The germ theory is well-founded, and perhaps that's why they truly say that we need to wash our hands in the hospital, silly as that may sound. In Malaysia, doctors' ties frequently are contaminated with methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*^[16], it seems

clear that doctors' ties are full of bacteria,^[17-19] posing a theoretical danger to patients, although considering the correlation of such contamination to hospital-acquired infection is difficult. However still there is trend to wear a tie. Our study has shown that parents and doctors prefer the paediatrician to be traditional in appearance. Majority of parents prefer white coat which is full sleeved, however few of them have no problem if their paediatrician is not wearing the apron, most of them recommended stethoscope, name plate, clean shave, formal shirt-pent with suit and tie, and majority had no problem with jeans, which says that people have changed their view regarding appearance of a paediatrician, they now accept the changes that have occurred with changes in fashion over a period of time, but they still have less preference for colourful fancy dresses, spectacles, chappals, lipsticks, fancy jewellery, t-shirts, skin tight clothes, fancy hair styles, multiple ear piercing and tattoos, there is favouring trends with regards to sleeveless clothes for female doctors and applying perfumes. For the views of doctors, data are almost same with some difference in that, that doctors are in more favour of applying perfumes and wearing sleeveless clothes for female doctors, and they prefer that apron of their paediatrician should be up to knee.

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