

Mandatory Standardized Nurses Uniform

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WHEREAS variances of uniform styles and colour worn by healthcare providers make it difficult for patients, family, visitors as well as team members to identify the nurse; and

WHEREAS without an identifying feature nurses look exactly like all the other staff who wear uniforms; and

WHEREAS a correlation has been identified between a patient's satisfaction with their hospital stay and the ability to recognize their nurse;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that RNAO develop guidelines to improve visibility, identification and professional appearance of nurses; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that RNAO work with the Ontario Nurses' Association (ONA) and other nursing unions to entice nurses to wear a standardized uniform in order to help our patients better distinguish who is providing their care.

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BACKGROUND

Patients and their families have identified that the confusion of not knowing who their nurse is can add to their distress during a hospital stay, and that contentment with their nursing care has been identified as the main factor influencing patient satisfaction.^{1,2} Patients' needs are simple: they want to know who is in charge of their care and how to identify this person.¹ If nurses wear a distinct uniform, it is easier and less confusing for patients and their families to know who is a nurse.^{3,4}

In January 2012, Nova Scotia became the first province in Canada to implement a standardized uniform for nurses. A provincial survey showed that 75% of respondents felt that it is important to clearly identify a nurse and other healthcare providers and 84% felt that a standardized uniform will help to do this.⁵

It is interesting that the issue of nursing uniforms has become a contentious one over the years. The history of nursing uniforms dates back to the time of Florence Nightingale, when they were worn with pride and served as a beacon to wounded soldiers letting them know that the person approaching their bedside was someone who would help ease their pain.

The idea of a standardized uniform is not a new one and professions such as the police and the fire service are integrally connected to the wearing of a uniform. In both these services, the wearing of a uniform has served as a point of pride to those brave men and women who have won the right to wear them. The same should hold true of the nursing profession; not everyone has earned the right to call themselves a nurse and those that do should be proud to wear a uniform as a symbol of their qualifications.

Most importantly, patients should not have to question who is approaching their bedside; the wearing of a standardized uniform would symbolize the professionalism of the nursing profession and assure patients that the person approaching their bedside is a nurse.

References

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