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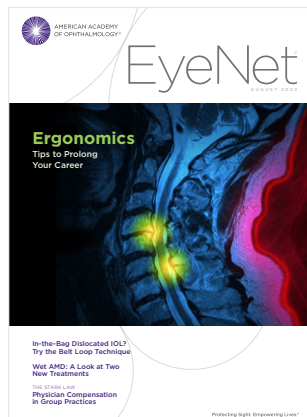
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Letters



Scrubs Suit Students

I read with interest the editorial by Ruth D. Williams, MD, discussing the role of attire in health care and distinguishing between prepandemic medical business attire and the postpandemic shift favoring scrubs and comfortable footwear (Opinion, August 2022). This is an increasingly prevalent conversation given the changing

dynamic of professional attire in an ophthalmology clinic.

From the perspective of a senior medical student, it appears that many of the standardized patient encounters with simulators and actors as patients require “business professional” attire. I have noticed, however, that medical students almost always prefer to wear scrubs during their third-year rotations when given the choice of suits or scrubs. When choosing scrubs, medical students err on the side of caution by staying away from brighter colors and adhering to navy blue, black, and gray. It is unlikely that the opinions of real patients about the attire of early medical trainees is explored at medical institutions. Students may not encounter real patients until they begin practicing in residency, but they do take part in simulated encounters with standardized patient actors. These often include feedback on student attire, including comments about nail polish, hair styles, and choice of pins on white coat lapels.

Perhaps medical school curricula can encourage scrubs instead of business attire, given that many medical student trainees are still practicing physical exam skills. Students can benefit from the flexibility of movement that scrubs allow, especially when conducting a musculoskeletal exam for the first few times during a clinical rotation or during a standardized patient encounter. Moreover, an analysis in the United Arab Emirates suggests that medical students benefit from wearing scrubs as their “uniforms,” as doing so further strengthens students’ exploration of their professional identity.¹

Ultimately, I would like to thank Dr. Williams for writing this piece and highlighting the fact that “it’s not about the clothes . . . it’s about the person in them.” For medical students, the choice to wear scrubs in a training setting may give them confidence to learn more during their clinical rotations.

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1 Sorrell S, Ibrahim H. *BMJ Open*. 2020;10(11):e039357.