

Families prefer ICU doctors in traditional white coats, scrubs

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(HealthDay)—Intensive care unit (ICU) physician attire may influence patient family perceptions, according to a research letter published online Feb. 18 in *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

Selena Au, M.D., from the University of Calgary in Canada, and colleagues surveyed 337 [family members](#) of consecutive patients admitted to three medical-surgical ICUs to assess patient family perceptions and preferences for physician attire. Using a random selection of 32 photographs of eight physician models, photograph panels were creating ensuring that each panel contained a photograph of each study attire (traditional white coat, scrubs, suit, and casual attire); two male and two female models; and one model of each visible race (white, black, Indian, and Asian).

When first meeting the ICU physician of a family member, the researchers found that the majority of participants reported that wearing an easy to read name tag (77 percent), neat grooming (65 percent), and professional dress (59 percent) were important. A minority of [respondents](#) felt that physician sex (3 percent), race (3 percent), and age (10 percent) were important. A larger minority felt that absence of visible tattoos (30 percent) and piercings (39 percent), or wearing a white coat (32 percent) were important. When selecting their preferred physician from a panel of pictures, respondents strongly favored physicians wearing traditional attire with a white coat, who were seen as most knowledgeable and honest. The majority selected the best physician overall as one with a white coat (52 percent), followed by scrubs (24 percent).

"While families may not express preferences for how physicians dress, there may be subconscious associations with well-recognized physician uniforms including white coats and scrubs," the authors write.

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