

Cardiovascular Surgery Patients' Preferences for Clothing Style in their Physicians and Patient-Physician Relations

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ABSTRACT

Aim: In this study, it was aimed to determine the relationship between the clothing style of physicians providing service in the Cardiovascular Surgery (CVS) clinic and patients' physician preferences.

Methods: This cross-sectional and descriptive study was carried out with 250 patients who would undergo open-heart surgery in the CVS clinic of a training and research hospital in Istanbul between April and August 2017. Data were obtained using the questionnaire form including questions about clothing preferences and their effects on patient-physician relations by showing the pictures of different clothing styles of both male and female physicians (classic, white coat, sport, uniform). In the data analysis, descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean), as well as the chi-square test for comparisons between the groups, were used.

Results: The average age of the participants was 55.37±14.33 years, and 55.2% of them were male. It was determined that white coat was the most preferred clothing style for CVS physicians. Younger patients compared to older patients, and male patients compared to female patients stated that they mostly wanted their physicians to wear a white coat during a routine physical examination and while sharing their private matters.

Conclusion: Patients stated that they preferred CVS physicians to primarily wear a white coat. For this reason, the white coat may positively affect patient-physician relations and may help a physician in making a good impression.

Keywords: Clothing, female, male, physician-patient relations, physicians

ÖZ

Kalp damar cerrahisi hastalarının hekimlerinde yeğledikleri giyim biçimi ve hasta-hekim ilişkisi

Amaç: Bu çalışmada, Kalp Damar Cerrahi (KVC) kliniğinde hizmet veren hekimlerin giyim tarzı ile hastaların hekim tercihi arasındaki ilişkiyi belirlemek amaçlanmıştır.

Yöntem: Çalışma kesitsel ve tanımlayıcı özellikte olup, Nisan-Ağustos tarihleri arasında, İstanbul'da bir eğitim ve araştırma hastanesinin, KVC kliniğinde tedavi gören 250 hasta ile yürütülmüştür. Veriler, hem kadın hem de erkek hekimlerin farklı giyim biçiminin resimleri gösterilerek (klasik, beyaz önlük, spor, forma), giyim tercihleri ve hasta hekim ilişkisine etkilerine ilişkin sorular içeren anket formu aracılığı ile elde edildi. Verilerin analizinde tanımlayıcı istatistikler (sıklık, yüzdelik, ortalama) yanında gruplararası karşılaştırmada ki kare testi kullanıldı.

Bulgular: Katılımcıların yaş ortalaması 55.37±14.33 olup, %55.2'si erkek hastalardan oluşmaktadır. KVC hekimleri için beyaz önlüğün en çok tercih edilen giyim tarzı olduğu belirlendi. Genç yaşta olan hastalar, yaşları daha ileri olan hastalara göre hekimlerinin beyaz önlük giymelerini daha çok istediklerini belirtmişlerdir. Kadın hastalar erkek hastalara göre sivil giyimli hekimleri daha çok tercih ettiği belirlendi.

Sonuç: Hastalar, KVC hekimlerinin öncelikli olarak beyaz önlüğü giymesini tercih ettiklerini belirttiler. Bu nedenle beyaz önlük hasta-hekim ilişkisini olumlu etkileyebilir ve hekimin iyi bir izlenim yaratmasında yardımcı olabilir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Giyim, hekim-hasta ilişkisi, hekimler, hasta memnuniyeti

Introduction

It is known that first impression is very important in human relations. Physicians' clothing styles may affect the patient's communication, commitment, confidence, respect and satisfaction with his/her physician (1). Clothing includes dress, hairstyle, make-up, accessory, and the things that are worn on the head and feet (2).

Clothing, which is a form of non-verbal communication and an important tool for interpersonal interaction, takes an important place in social life (2). The importance of clothing in physicians dates back to Hippocrates. Hippocrates stated that a physician should be clean and well dressed and that a patient's confidence in his/her physician is a basic prerequisite for good patient-physician relations and treatment compliance (3). In addition to the positive effects of a white coat, which has become the symbol of medicine, such as the fact that physicians are realized by their colleagues and patients, an indication of professionalism and hygienic suitability, its use causes disagreements in terms of creating formality in patient-physician relations (4,5).

In international publications, it is stated in the first interviews held with patients that the physical appearance of physicians plays an important role in the quality of patient-physician relations (6-9). In recent years, studies examining the relationship between physician's clothing style and patient preferences have also gained importance in our country (2,5,10,11). The factors complementing the physician's clothing such as the physician's good humoredness, listening and communication skills, empathy developing, years of experience, age, gender, speech style, wearing a name tag on which name is written, and stylish appearance are also other factors that affect patient-physician relations (3,4).

Upon examining the literature, it is observed that studies on the clothing style of physicians are often carried out in psychiatric medicine (2,5), dentistry (10), dermatology medicine (8), general medicine fields such as patient waiting room or pharmacies (3,12). When the relevant national and international publications were examined, it was determined that there was no study carried out with Cardiovascular Surgery (CVS) physicians.

CVS operations are among the greatest causes of anxiety for patients because of their risks. Therefore, the confidence and belief of patients and their relatives in physicians are very

important. The first impression made between the patient and the physician is thought to be effective in overcoming the difficulties experienced before and after the operation.

Aim

In this study, it was aimed to determine the relationship between the clothing style of physicians providing service in the CVS clinic and patients' physician preferences.

Research Questions

What should the clothing style of physicians providing service in the CVS clinic be?

Is there a relationship between the clothing style of physicians providing service in the CVS clinic and patients' physician preferences?

Material and Method

Research Design

This cross-sectional and descriptive study was carried out between April and August 2017.

Sample

250 patients, who would undergo open-heart surgery in the CVS clinic of a training and research hospital in Istanbul, determined by the random sampling method and who met the criteria described below constituted the sample of the study (Response rate: 59.5%).

Inclusion criteria

- (1) Applying for open-heart surgery in the CVS clinic,
- (2) Ability to understand the questions and express ideas,
- (3) Accepting participation in the study and giving informed consent.
- (4) Having no Dementia or Alzheimer diagnosis

Exclusion criteria

- (1) incomplete filling of forms
- (2) inability to answer the questions due to any diseases or dementia

Data Collection Tools

In the study, the Information Form (six questions) and the Questionnaire on Clothing Style and Behavior (eleven questions) were used for the collection of data.

Information Form

The information form consists of questions related to participants' gender, age, marital status, level of education, profession, and duration of illness.

Questionnaire on clothing style and behavior

This questionnaire, which was prepared for physicians' clothing styles and the factors that may be effective in patients' preference for them, was developed by the researchers in accordance with the literature (4,13-17). The questionnaire consists of a total of 11 multiple-choice questions and two sections.

In the first section, which patients evaluate the characteristics that affect physician preferences, there were seven questions; preferred gender and age of physician, the importance of clothing style, the effect of clothing style on confidence of the physician, the effect of clothing style on treatment. In the second section, patients evaluated physicians' clothes. There were pictures of different physician clothing styles separately for men and women, and there were four questions related to this picture. The patients were asked about their preferences for how their physicians should get dressed during a routine physical examination and while sharing their private matters (psychological and sexual, etc.). Furthermore, the patients were also asked to indicate the clothing styles of the physician whom they trust the most and whose recommendation they consider.

The form was presented to a group of cardiovascular surgeon, CVS service nurse, psychiatric nurse, psychologist and academic staff who were not included in the study to receive experts' opinions. A pilot study was conducted with fifteen patients to determine whether the questions were clear and understandable. The questions were reorganized in accordance with the expert opinions and pilot study.

Procedure

The study was initiated after getting the necessary ethical approval and institutional permissions. The patients who were waiting in the outpatient clinic were informed about the study. The patients who met the inclusion criteria of the study and gave verbal and written consent were taken to a separate room to avoid the interruption of the interviews. An appropriate physical environment was provided to conduct a comfortable

and effective interview. Forms were applied by a face-to-face interview on the basis of respecting patients' privacy. Necessary explanations were made for the patients who had difficulty in understanding or reading. Interviews lasted for approximately 5-10 minutes.

There was no intervention of physicians in the data collection, and data were collected by a CVS administrative nurse who had experience in the clinic (TŞ). To avoid the risk of data collection bias, no medical staff except physicians, including the interviewer, wore a white uniform during the interview. The interviewer paid attention not to be judgmental or confirmative for the answers given by patients about to physicians' clothing styles.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was performed using IBM-SPSS (Windows, Version 21). Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean) calculated and the chi-square tests were used to between groups comparisons.

Ethical Aspect of the Study

The necessary ethical approval (Protocol Number: 2017/556) was obtained from the institutional ethical committee where the study was carried out. The patients who participated in the study were informed according to the Declaration of Helsinki (WMA), and their written and verbal consent were obtained.

Results

Personal Characteristics

The average age of the participants was 55.37±14.33 years, and 55.2% of them were male. Other characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Factors that influence patients' choice of physicians

Total 14.8% of the participants stated that the gender of the physician who will perform the surgery to him/her is important. 75.7% of the patients stated that physician's gender is important were preferred female physicians (Table 2).

Patients preferences about physician clothing style according to socio demographic characteristics

A great majority of participants primarily preferred a white coat during a routine physical examination and while sharing

their private matters. Furthermore, a great majority of participants stated that they had more confidence in physicians wearing a white coat (82.8%) and considered their recommendations (82.8%) (Table 3).

Table 1: Some socio-demographic characteristics of participants (n=250)

	Number (n)	Frequency (%)
Gender		
Female	112	44.8
Male	135	55.2
Marital Status		
Married	223	89.2
Single	27	10.8
Education		
Illiterate	42	16.8
Primary school	121	48.4
Secondary school	44	17.6
High school	35	14.0
University	8	3.2
Occupation		
Housewife	92	36.8
Empolyed	71	28.4
Officer	9	3.6
Retired	60	24.0
Other	18	7.2

Table 2: Features affecting physician preference

	Number (n)	Frequency (%)
Physician's gender		
Important	37	14.8
Not important	213	85.2
Preferred gender if it evaluate as important (n= 37)		
Female	28	.75.7
Male	9	.24.3
Effect of of physicans clothing style on therapy		
Yes	82	32.8
No	163	65.2
Not sure	5	2.0
Preferred physician age		
20-35	12	4.8
26-50	188	75.2
51 and over	50	20.0

Table 3: Preferred physician clothing style in various conditions

	Plain clothing (classic/ sport)		White coat		Uniform	
	Number (n)	Frequency (%)	Number (n)	Frequency (%)	Number (n)	Frequency (%)
Routine physical examination	19	7,6	99	79,6	32	12,8
Sharing private matters	22	8,8	198	79,2	30	12,0
The most confident	15	6,0	207	82,8	28	11,2
Took into account physician's recommendations	16	6,4	205	82,0	29	11,6

Younger patients compared to older patients, and male patients compared to female patients stated that they mostly wanted their physicians to wear a white coat during a routine physical examination and while sharing their private matters. Furthermore, the patients who were male and younger stated that they had more confidence in physicians wearing a white coat and considered their recommendations (Table 3).

Table 4: Preferred physician clothing style according to patients characteristics

	n	n	n
Rutin Physical Examination			
Gender			
Female	16	88	8
Male	4	118	16
		$\chi^2=6.72$	$p=0.037$
Age			
50 and under	14	163	29
51 and over	12	20	11
		$\chi^2=9.40$	$p=0.025$
Sharing private matters			
Gender			
Female	17	84	11
Male	5	114	19
		$\chi^2=11.98$	$p=0.007$
Age			
50 and under	13	167	26
51 and over	9	30	5
		$\chi^2=9.50$	$p=0.023$
The most confident			
Gender			
Female	12	90	10
Male	3	117	18
		$\chi^2=8.59$	$p=0.014$
Age			
50 and under	9	174	23
51 and over	6	32	5
		$\chi^2=5.86$	$p=0.050$
Considered physicians'recommendations			
Gender			
Female	13	89	10
Male	3	116	19
		$\chi^2=10.003$	$p=0.007$
Age			
50 and under	7	176	23
51 and over	6	33	4
		$\chi^2=7.23$	$p=0.048$

Discussion

Features affecting physician preference

In conservative societies, the religion (especially in Muslim societies) of individuals and cultural values may affect their health behaviors, and especially. Female patients mostly prefer female physicians (4). The majority of female patients do not want that their exclusive and private body parts are seen by a male physician, they do not go to a male physician because of feeling ashamed unless they are obliged, and their partners also state that they do not want that their wives are examined by a male physician (18). The finding in the present study regarding the fact that the patients with gender preference mostly prefer female physicians is consistent with the literature data.

Physician clothing preferences

In the studies, which evaluating patients' opinions about their physicians' clothing styles, there are no explicit results about the association between patients' expectations and physicians' preferences. Although there are some studies exist to show that

the white coat does not affect patient-physician relations (13,15,16), some studies express that it negatively affects this communication (14,17), and in some studies, it is stated that patients prefer white coat for their physicians (5,8,19).

The white coat can be the cause of anxiety in some patients. This condition, which is known as "white coat syndrome" or "white coat hypertension," is defined as the normal blood pressure measurements at home despite high blood pressure measurements in the hospital environment (20). Physician examinations can increase blood glucose levels, as well as blood pressure, in patients. It is well known that stress increases blood glucose levels. In cases when the glucose levels measured in the clinic are higher than the glucose levels measured at home, "white coat hyperglycemia" is mentioned (12).

The patients' clothing style preferences for their physicians are affected by the social culture (4,9). In a recent systematic review regarding the issue, 30 studies from different countries were reviewed and it was found that out the uniform and white coat were firstly preferred (in 60% of the studies) clothing style (1). In the first studies on this issue, it was stated that English



Figure 1: Cardiovascular surgery physicians' clothing styles (1: Classic, 2: White coat, 3: sport, and 4: uniform)

(n=475 patients and n=30 physicians) and American (n=404 patients) patients prefer the white coat, which is a traditional physician style, and formal clothing (21,22). Gjerdingen et al. (21) stated that casual clothes like jeans and sports shoes have a negative effect on patients. In another study (n=451 patients) carried out in New Zealand, patients reported that they found physicians with sportswear friendlier and that it was easier to communicate with them compared to physicians in a formal dress (17). In the study (n= 259) carried out by Kersnik et al. (15) in Slovenia, it was reported that none of the clothing styles of physicians affected patients' preferences. In the study (n= 329) carried out by Maruani et al. (8) in France, the vast majority of children, adolescents, and adults receiving treatment in dermatology clinics preferred their physicians to wear white coats. In a study (n=491) carried out by Kurihara et al. (3) in pharmacies in Japan, they reported that patient preferences were influenced by the speech and clothing styles of physicians and that the white coat was on the first rank. In the study (n=343) carried out by Shrestha et al. (19) in a gynecology clinic in Nepal, it was found out that patients firstly preferred the white coat. In the study (n=399) carried out by Al-Ghobai et al. (4) the patients in the waiting room in Saudi Arabia, the majority of patients stated that it is important that physicians should wear formal clothes and that they mostly prefer the white coat.

In the study (n=686) carried out by Özçaka et al. (10) with the patients who came to dentistry in Turkey, 86.2% of the participants stated that they firstly preferred the white coat. In the study carried out by Sönmez et al. (12) with patients and their relatives in pharmacies, while 65.4% of the participants preferred their physicians to wear a white coat, 25.0% of them answered that it does not matter, and 9.6% of them answered that they should not wear a white coat. In the study (153 patients and 94 psychiatrists) in which Atasoy et al. (5) investigated the patient preferences of psychiatrists' clothing, it was reported that both patients and psychiatrists firstly preferred the white coat. In the study (n=64) carried out by Çeri et al. (2) among children receiving treatment in child and adolescent psychiatric clinics, participants firstly preferred the white coat. Both in national and international publications, it is observed that white coat and formal clothes are first choice of patients. In this study, the fact that the white coat is the most preferred clothing style for CVS physicians is consistent with

the majority of studies in the literature but inconsistent with the idea that wearing a white coat would disrupt patient-physician relations.

Physician clothing style preferences according to the patient's age and gender

There are no explicit results exist about patients' age and the physicians clothing style preferences. In a recent systematic review regarding the issue, it was stated that older patients preferred white coats. More of this studies carried out in Europe and Asia compared to the studies carried out in America (1). Similarly, studies show that older patients care for classical clothing. There are studies show that no relationship between age and clothing preferences are also available in the literature (4,16,23,24). In our study, younger patients stated that they mainly prefer their physicians to wear a white coat during interviews with them, compared to older patients. This may be due to the existing sociocultural structure of the hospital environment where the study was carried out. This suggests that young patients in the society think that there should be the formality in their relations with physicians, that they do not want to be "friends" with them, and that they want to see their physicians more professional. In the literature, the studies examining the patient's opinions about the physician's choice of clothing, the gender differences have not been studied much. (1). In this study, while female patients mostly preferred plain clothed physicians during the interviews, male patients mostly preferred physicians in white coat. It is believed that, female patients place more importance than male patients on physicians' clothing style. Both our study and the literature suggests that clothing actually has a variable aspect in patient-physician relations, but there is no "one-size-fits-all approach."

Conclusion

The effect of physicians' clothing styles on patients' perceptions is complex and multi-factorial. Patients have many contextual and institution-specific ideas for physicians' clothing. This study will contribute to having information regarding the fact that CVS physicians' clothing styles could be effective on patients, and increasing awareness of the subject. Thus, better support for individuals, and giving the necessary importance to physicians' clothing styles will surely improve the quality of health care.

Limitations

CVS physicians provide services in outpatient and inpatient clinics, intensive care units, emergency and surgery departments of hospitals. In this study, the patients were inquired about their preferences about CVS physicians clothing style only in polyclinic and service settings.

In this study, the relationship between patients' confidence in their physicians and clothing styles of physicians was examined. The confounding factors such as listening and communication skills, empathy developing, stylish appearance, physician's experience and good humoredness that may affect confidentiality of physicians. This factors were not examined in this study. Furthermore, this study was carried out only in the CVS clinic of a single center and with a relatively small sample. This weakens the generalizability of the results.

The photographs used in the study belong to young physicians who are both male and female. This is also considered as a limitation of the study because of the fact that if older physicians were made wear the same clothes and their

photographs were taken, it was not clear whether the participants would do the same voting. Furthermore, the study was carried out only in Istanbul. It should be considered that people living in different regions of Turkey may have different preferences.

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