



Guidelines for Professional Presentation and Clinical Attire

The professional appearance of students in the School of Veterinary Nursing at Otago Polytechnic influences animal/patient care as well as the public image of the veterinary industry. Students in the School of Veterinary Nursing should present themselves with an aim to contribute to a hygienic, unobtrusive, calm, and comfortable environment that focuses on the needs and a healing of the animal as well as overall wellbeing of clinical colleagues and clients. To achieve this, the following standards as a guideline to professional presentation and attire in the animal healthcare environment.

Professional Presentation

1. Perfumes, colognes, tobacco odours, and excessive body odour should be avoided in the animal healthcare environment as they can be nauseating to sick patients and distressing to clients and work colleagues.
2. Hair should be tidy, and professionally worn, e.g. short, off the collar, or secured in a way that avoids hair falling over the shoulders. Dreadlocks or braids, if worn, must be clean, well maintained, and, if below the collar, must be secured. Beards and facial hair must be neat, and clean and must fit within face/surgical masks.
3. Fingernails must be short, below the tips of the fingers, and clean. Nail polish and false fingernails including acrylics, gels, or wraps should be avoided as they can hide dirt and harbour pathogens.
4. Jewellery should be avoided in the clinical environment.
 - a. Earrings must never be worn in the surgical theatre to avoid the potential of dropping into the surgical field. Earrings in the clinical hospital environment must be small and not dangling so as not to pose risks during animal handling.
 - b. Body piercing other than earlobes, should not be visible unless express permission has been granted by the workplace.
 - c. Jewellery below the elbow such as rings, bracelets and wrist watches must not be worn as they harbour pathogens and prevent thorough cleaning and optimal hand/arm hygiene.
5. Mobile phones should be used with discretion in the clinical environment. Hand hygiene must be maintained when handling mobile devices as they can be vectors for cross contamination. Students must act professionally, using the phone for access to references only. Students must limit email, text messaging, or call features in the clinical settings.

Professional Attire

1. Appropriate clinical attire consists of hygienic, easy to clean uniforms and name tags that are appropriate to the animal healthcare environment.
2. To assist with optimal infection control, all uniforms worn in the clinical environment should be:
 - a. Clean - washed daily regardless of whether there is visible dirt/soiling.
 - b. Short sleeved so that staff are bare below the elbow.
 - c. Well presented, and wrinkle free.

- d. Worn *only* in the clinical environment, not on the street or in other public places.
 - e. Changed regularly during the work day if they become contaminated/soiled by body fluids to reduce risks of cross contamination between animals or risks to public health.
 3. To assist with health & safety and optimal infection control, all shoes worn in the clinical environment should follow these guidelines:
 - a. All clinical footwear must be of a material that is easily cleaned and disinfected. Shoes should be washed and disinfected regularly regardless of whether there is visible dirt/soiling.
 - b. All clinical footwear must be closed-toe – the entire top of the foot should be covered to protect against sharps, chemicals, and injuries from animal handling.
 - c. Surgical theatre footwear must be autoclavable or fully disinfected each week, and shoe covers should be worn over the shoes when in theatre.
 - d. Isolation room footwear should be gumboots that are worn in the isolation room only and fully disinfected each week. Foot baths should not be used – instead disposable foot covers may be worn over gumboots and disposed of each time the room is exited.
 4. To assist with appropriate identification and transparency in roles, students should wear a name tag that defines their role as a student.
 - a. Otago Polytechnic student name tags should be worn in the clinical environment by all students.
 - b. Name tags should be well presented, well attached, and hygienically maintained.
 5. To assist with infection control, attire used as personal protective equipment (e.g. theatre wear, isolation wear, dental procedure wear, cleaning) should only be used for the task and then removed before handling other patients or interacting with other people or equipment in the clinical environment.
 6. Students not employed in their clinical workplace should identify themselves as Otago Polytechnic students by wearing an Otago Polytechnic uniform, as instructed by their learning advisor, and in agreement with their workplace.
 7. Students employed by their clinical workplace should adhere to practice policy and instructions on the uniform and name tags to be worn and should maintain the uniform in a professional and hygienic way.

References

1. *Guidelines for Reducing Pathogens in Veterinary Hospitals: Disinfectant Selection, Cleaning Protocols, and Hand Hygiene*. **Portner, Joshua A and Johnson, Justine A.** s.l. : Vetlearn: MediMedia Animal Health, 2010, Compendium: Continuing Education for Veterinarians.

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