

What is Professional Attire?

Amanda Zelinski, PharmD, BCACP

Fairleigh Dickinson University School of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, Florham Park, NJ



**FAIRLEIGH
DICKINSON
UNIVERSITY**

School of Pharmacy & Health Sciences



Introduction

- Colleges and schools of pharmacy (SoP) require student pharmacists to demonstrate professional behaviors as a part of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP) Center for the Advancement of Pharmacy Education (CAPE) 2013 and Curricular Outcomes and Entrustable Professional Activities (COEPA) 2022 outcomes, which is often interpreted to include professional personal appearance and standard of dress.^{1,2}
- While there is no explicit statement of dress requirement in the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) Standards 2016, multiple standards speak to educating graduates on personal and professional development.³ This includes behaviors and attitudes for demonstrating professionalism and self-awareness of beliefs, biases, motivation, and emotions that could impact professional development and/or patient care.
- SoP dress codes are most often applied in simulation/skills laboratories, direct patient care activities, and experiential rotations. Some SoP require professional attire throughout the didactic and experiential curriculum.^{4,5,6,7}
- Due to the lack of agreement on professional attire and appearance for student pharmacists, an understanding of the “norms” for professional dress in pharmacy is needed.** This is a timely discussion as pharmacy educators continue to address professional identity formation, and studies suggest that proper dress was correlated to self-perceived knowledge, competence, and intelligence.^{8,9}

Methods

- A cross-sectional survey titled “Perceptions of Professional Attire” was created and distributed using Qualtrics XM. A copy of the survey is available by scanning the QR code.
- The survey contained questions on perception of clothing and appearance in reference to professionalism. Items were selected based on results of the SoP dress code findings, and professional experience. Response options included: “Yes [professional]”, “No [not professional]”, or abstention. The survey was anonymous, using a single shared link. Additional data collected included demographic data such as gender identity, generation, geographic region, and primary practice site. The survey was peer reviewed by a clinical practice pharmacist prior to distribution.
- Distribution via online post to national pharmacy organization discussion boards; APhA Preceptor SIG (n=1745), AACP Experiential Education Section (n=1380), and AACP Laboratory Instructors SIG (n=442) in June 2023.
- A sample size of 384 is needed to adequately represent the current population of working pharmacists in the United States, 325,480, with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error.
- Frequency and percentage statistics were used to analyze qualitative data. Consensus was defined as a two-thirds majority of votes ($\geq 66.66\%$). Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated during secondary subgroup analysis. Data analysis was performed using Qualtrics XM and Microsoft Excel Version 2305.
- The Fairleigh Dickinson University Institutional Review Board determined this project was exempt.



Description	Respondents, Number (%)
Gender	
Male	177 (29.5)
Female	415 (69.3)
Geographic Region	
Midwest	291 (48.6)
Northeast	201 (33.6)
Southeast	53 (8.8)
Southwest	33 (5.5)
West	21 (3.5)
Generation	
Baby Boomer (1946-1964)	59 (9.8)
GenX (1965-1980)	201 (33.6)
Millennial (1981-1996)	326 (54.4)
GenZ (1997-2012)	13 (2.2)
Practice Site	
Hospital	209 (34.9)
Community	153 (25.5)
Academia	149 (24.9)
Industry	10 (1.7)
Other non-direct patient care	32 (5.3)
Other direct patient care	46 (7.7)

Results / Discussion

- Survey data (n=599) revealed the following items are perceived to be professional: black sneakers (87.5%), above the knee skirts (80%), and knee length skirts (98.2%).
- There was also a consensus that the following items are *not* professional: yoga pants (84.5%), leggings (85.8%), shorts (94.8%), crop tops (93.8%), graphic t-shirts (95.2%), miniskirts (93.5%), fashion shoes (82.5%), and furry boots (80.8%).
- Secondary analysis by generation indicates that the millennial generation respondents (n=326) had the highest rate of acceptance of non-traditional hair color (52.8%), tattoos (64.7%), and ear gauges (44.2%) as professional.
- It must be considered that people identify as GenX or Baby Boomer have seen a great evolution in women's attire in their lifetime. The women's rights movement in the 1970's led to less restrictions on women's appearance, such as the cultural acceptance of women wearing pants in the workplace.
- Secondary analysis by practice site indicates a higher percentage of community-based pharmacists perceive yoga pants and black jeans to be professional compared to hospital-based pharmacists; 23.5% vs 9.6% and 52.3% vs 30.1% .
- Those practicing in industry (n=10) unanimously voted that non-traditional hair colors, crop tops, graphic t-shirts, shorts, and fashion shoes were not professional.
- It must be noted that each practice site may have restrictions on clothing and footwear for safety reasons, which have nothing to do with professional attire.
- While this survey was of an acceptable sample size, it had some limitations. There was a lack of response from the west and southwest regions, and since individual identities were not collected, there is a chance a non-pharmacist could have responded to the survey. Additionally, this was not an exhaustive list of clothing items which could be evaluated.

Conclusion

Dress codes/policies should be reviewed and updated at regular intervals to be in accordance with most current societal norms and legal statutes.

References /

Author Contact Information

- References:**
- Medina MS, Plaza CM, Stowe CD, et al. Center for the Advancement of Pharmacy Education 2013 Educational Outcomes. Am J Pharm Educ. 2013;77(8):Article 162.
 - Medina MS, Farland MZ, Malcom DR, et al. AACP Curriculum Outcomes and Entrustable Professional Activities (COEPA) 2022. <https://www.aacp.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/coepa-document-final.pdf>. Accessed November 30, 2022.
 - Naughton CA, Schweiger TA, Angelo LB, Lea Bonner C, Dhing CW, Farley JF. Expanding Dress Code Requirements in the Doctor of Pharmacy Program. Am J Pharm Educ. 2016 Jun 25;80(5):74. doi: 10.5688/ajpe80574.
 - Howard University School of Pharmacy Student Handbook 2020. Available at: <https://pharmacy.howard.edu/sites/pharmacy.howard.edu/files/2020-10/COP%20Handbook%20Fall%202020.pdf>. Access November 30, 2022.
 - Touro University College of Pharmacy Catalog 2022-2024. Available https://tcop.touro.edu/media/schools-and-colleges/tourocop/documents/TCOP_Catalog.pdf. Accessed June 20, 2024.
 - College of Pharmacy STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL ATTIRE. Available at <https://www.ulm.edu/pharmacy/documents/ospa/studentdresscode.pdf>. Accessed June 20, 2024.
 - Naughton CA, Schweiger TA, Angelo LB, Lea Bonner C, Dhing CW, Farley JF. Expanding Dress Code Requirements in the Doctor of Pharmacy Program. Am J Pharm Educ. 2016 Jun 25;80(5):74. doi: 10.5688/ajpe80574.
 - Kwon Y-H. The influence of appropriateness of dress and gender on the self-perception of occupational attributes. Clothing and Textiles Res J. 1994;12:33-39

Author Contact Information:
Amanda Zelinski, Fairleigh Dickinson University School of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, azelinski@fdu.edu

Acknowledgements: Alyssa Gallipani, PharmD, BCACP.