

## Creating Healthy Work Environments VIRTUAL 2021

### Considering Body Art in Dress Code Policies in Colleges of Nursing

**Jodie C. Gary, PhD, RN**

Alison F. Pittman, PhD, RN

*Texas A&M Univeristy College of Nursing, Bryan, TX, USA*

#### **Purpose:**

Body art or self-expression such as tattoos, piercings, and even hair color modifications are common (Mercer, 2017) and despite this prevalence, stigma remains (Broussard & Harton, 2018), especially for health care providers (Johnson. et al, 2016). One school's vision to educate and empower a diverse population of nurse leaders has policies governing student appearance such as tattoos, piercings, and hair color that warrant evaluation for inclusivity and respect for diversity. While strict adherence to policy is expected, students, faculty, and staff have voiced incongruence with diversity positioned as an exploration of individual differences in a safe, positive, welcoming, and nurturing academic environment. Evidence-informed policies for nursing education are needed that also reflect diversity and inclusion not only of the population served, but of the students as well.

To this end, a project was undertaken to consider current research and policies related to body art in nursing education in development of recommendations related to enhancing inclusion and diversity within the dress code policy. This project uniquely considers the integration of global health perspectives in educational and clinical environments through a thoughtful review of policies governing the appearance of nursing students for inclusivity and respect for diversity.

#### **Methods:**

A scoping review of literature and policy analysis are underway. Scoping reviews are useful in identifying knowledge gaps, setting research agendas, and identifying implications for policy or practice (Tricco et al., 2016). Electronic databases for published and unpublished literature concerning body art, and dress and applicable nomenclature within nursing education and clinical practice are being searched. Data abstraction will be performed by one reviewer and verified by a second reviewer. Quantitative and qualitative syntheses will be conducted. In addition, dress code policies of national and global colleges and schools of nursing will be examined.

#### **Results:**

Results will foster practical recommendations to ensure inclusivity as well as contribute to establishing responsibility at the college level toward becoming a campus that is welcoming to all. The hope is to provide timely and relevant recommendations concerning current dress code policies as well as document (within local and global context of health professions literature) the current opinions related to body art in nursing education.

#### **Conclusion:**

Thinking outside limitations on diversity as focusing only on race and ethnicity, this project integrates global health perspectives in educational and professional environments by adding breadth and scope to the diversity mission in colleges of nursing with updated policy recommendations concerning body art. Professionalism

should be encapsulated by knowledge, behavior, and attitudes versus appearance (Caldeira et al., 2017; Williams et al., 2019). Open discussion and more research about perceptions of body art in nursing programs and health care settings is encouraged as the profession continues to explore the definition of professional appearance and behavior and how they are incorporated into the nursing role while promoting diversity and self-expression.

---

**Title:**

Considering Body Art in Dress Code Policies in Colleges of Nursing

**Keywords:**

body art, diversity in the work environment and self-expression

**Abstract Summary:**

Body art as self-expression is controversial in the health care work environment and the ethical and professional discussions surrounding body art in nursing must begin in educational programs. Using current evidence in academic and clinical nursing literature, this project aims to enhance inclusion and diversity within nursing programs.

**References:**

- Broussard, K.A. & Harton, H.C. (2018) Tattoo or taboo? Tattoo stigma and negative attitudes toward tattooed individuals. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 158, 521-540, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.2017.1373622>
- Caldeira, S., Lourenço, M., Vidal, T., & Figueiredo, A. S. (2017). Tattoo or no tattoo? A contemporary ethical issue in nursing education. *Nursing Ethics*, 24(5), 626-628. doi:10.1177/0969733016679472
- Johnson, S. C., Doi, M. M., & Yamamoto, L. G. (2016). Adverse effects of tattoos and piercing on parent/patient confidence in health care providers. *Clinical Pediatrics*, 55(10), 915-920. doi:10.1177/0009922815616889
- 0009922815616889 Mercer, M. (2017). Explosion in tattooing, piercing tests state regulators. The Pew Charitable Trusts. Retrieved from <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2017/06/14/explosion-in-tattooing-piercing-tests-state-regulators>
- Tricco, A. C., Lillie, E., Zarin, W., O'Brien, K., Colquhoun, H., Kastner, M., ... & Kenny, M. (2016). A scoping review on the conduct and reporting of scoping reviews. *BMC medical research methodology*, 16(1), 15.
- Williams, B. M., Wright, C., Leigh, K. H., Armstrong, B., & Kelley, S. (2019). Tattoos in Nursing: Do We Practice What We Preach? *Journal of Christian Nursing*, 36(1), 38-41

First Primary Presenting Author

**Primary Presenting Author**

Jodie C. Gary, PhD, RN

Texas A&M University College of Nursing  
Assistant Professor  
Bryan, Texas  
USA

**Author Summary:** Dr. Gary has 25 years of healthcare experience including field emergency management, clinical and laboratory research, and hospital-based primary care specializing in critical care nursing. She is an Assistant Professor with the College of Nursing at Texas A&M University. Her research interests focus on patient-centered care concepts within the complexity of healthcare through community-based participatory research. She is also recognized leader for interprofessional education (IPE) initiatives across her academic health science center.

Second Secondary Presenting Author

***Corresponding Secondary Presenting Author***

Alison F. Pittman, PhD, RN  
Texas A&M University College of Nursing  
Assistant Professor  
Bryan, Texas  
USA

**Author Summary:** Dr. Pittman is a clinical assistant professor at Texas A&M College of Nursing. She has devoted 23 years to pediatric critical care nursing, education, and research. Her research interests focus on vulnerable populations and include pediatric obesity and wellness, LGBTQIA+ health disparities, prevention and effects of adverse childhood events (ACEs), and innovations in nursing education. She is a Certified Pediatric Nurse, Certified Nurse Educator, and Certified Healthcare Simulation Educator.