

# Position Statement: Name badges details for Healthcare workers, 2019

## Introduction

Most health-care working environments require staff to wear some form of identification, usually name badges that can be viewed by health consumers and their families/whānau. A range of issues need to be taken into account when deciding the appropriate level of personal information being displayed.

## Definition

For the purposes of this document, the words “name badge” do not refer to the photo identification cards commonly worn by staff on lanyards or clips. These identification cards are usually not readily seen or readable by health consumers. Rather “name badge” refers to a badge usually worn by the health-care workers that is highly visible, in large print showing a range of staff details and is aimed at helping health consumers identify the staff members caring for them.

## Discussion

### Health Consumers

In New Zealand, the wearing of name badges by health-care workers is considered to help fulfil the Health and Disability Commission (HDC) Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights Regulations (1996): Right 6 - Right to be Fully Informed and Right 10 - Right to Complain. Malcolm, Wong and Elwood-Martin (2008) noted that helping health consumers to easily identify their carers (via staff name badges) enhanced health consumers experience and possibly their health outcomes. From a New Zealand perspective Ka'ai, and Higgins.(2004) believe there is evidence of the importance of health-care workers' surnames being displayed to ensure health consumers can identify and connect with their carers through whanaungatanga (pp13-25).

### Māori worldview

NZNO recognises the needs and rights of health consumers to be able to identify their carers and be able to whakapapa with them. NZNO embraces Te Tiriti O Waitangi and our aim is to enhance the health and well-being of all people of Aotearoa New Zealand. NZNO recognises that a full name on a name badge acknowledges health consumers' rights as defined by Te Tiriti O Waitangi and that, from a Māori worldview, using first and surnames on name badges is an element of manaakitanga. Manaakitanga affords health consumers the right to know who their carers are and making connections to those carers and the carers' whānau is fundamental to whanaungatanga. Shortening names may be seen as dishonouring the people that went before and as such may be considered disrespectful.

### Health Workers

Name badges that display full identification details of health-care workers may, in certain circumstances, contribute to those workers' safety and privacy being put at risk. According to Richardson, Grainger, Ardagh and Morrison (2018) in New Zealand, figures indicate a marked increase in health-care workers reporting of violent and/or threatening incidents since 2012 and that these incidences are still likely to be under-reported.

There is international evidence that indicates displaying comprehensive identification details puts health-care workers' privacy, as well as physical and psychological safety, at risk. Pathé and Melroy (2013), Spector, Zhou and Che (2013) and the American Occupational Safety and Health Administration (2016) for example all note the threatened and actual violence to healthcare workers is often perpetuated by health consumers or their families, and includes the use of social media to threaten, cyberbully, stalk and abuse. An abuser's links to the health-care worker may include the health-care workers' wider social, professional or personal groups. Health-care workers whose comprehensive identification details are freely visible to health consumers and others have little anonymity and this level of exposure of personal details could put those healthcare workers at risk of harm. The United States 2016 Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) document Guidelines for Preventing Workplace Violence - for Healthcare and Social Service Workers recommended name badges holding only first names and designation be used to help reduce risk (p. 21)

Under New Zealand laws individuals can expect to have their privacy respected and safety at work protected. The Health and Safety at Work Act (2015) requires employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practical, the health and safety of its workers. This means that sometimes an employer won't be able to make an employee wear a name badge with their full name printed on it, if this might put them in the way of actual or potential harm from health consumers or members of the public. Also, employers must respect their employees' privacy rights in terms of the disclosure of their full names to members of the public.

In 2007 the Privacy Commissioner supported a hospital that declined to share staff identities with a health consumer. The hospital provided some information at the request of the health consumer but refused to provide the remaining information (staff identifications) under principle 6, section 29(1a) of the Privacy Act (1993). It submitted that releasing the information would involve the disclosure of another person's affairs (the nurses' identity and the fact they were rostered on duty at particular times) and that disclosure would be unwarranted in these particular circumstances. Two years later the Human Rights Tribunal supported both the Privacy Commissioner's and the DHB's decisions. Although recognising the health consumer had a prima facie right to the nurses' names under the Health Information Privacy Code and Code of Rights, it was considered releasing the nurses' names "...would be likely to endanger the safety of (those) individuals..."(2009):

## **NZNO Recommendations**

NZNO recognizes that the needs and rights of health consumers to be able to identify their carers and be able to whakapapa with them, must be balanced with the needs and rights of health-care workers to feel safe in their work environment and be afforded personal privacy.

NZNO is aware many nurses believe comprehensive identification details on a name badge may compromise their online privacy and expose them to personal risk. Therefore NZNO encourages nurses to manage the use and privacy settings of computers and electronic transmitting devices, websites and pages, in line with NZNO's Social media and the nursing profession: A guide to online professionalism for nurses and nursing students (2012) and Nursing Council of New Zealand (NCNZ) guideline: Social Media and Electronic Communication (2012) recommendations to help reduce risk:

NZNO also reminds nurses of their responsibilities to maintain professional boundaries in accordance with NCNZ guidelines.

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Acknowledging Aotearoa New Zealand's unique cultural considerations, the rights of health consumers, the evidence of risk to health-care workers and current laws, NZNO recommends that the minimum information on any badge should be the health-care workers first name and designation. Should the employer require more information, for example surnames, then NZNO strongly recommends that employers provide employees with the right to negotiate what their individual name badge displays, through a fair and transparent process. The process must reflect that all components - the physical (tinana), emotional (hinengaro), spiritual (wairua) and social (whanau) - of staff's safety, health and well-being are considered equally. The process must recognise that threats to a staff member's safety, health and well-being may be real or perceived and should be considered equally within this process. NZNO believes these recommendations should ensure health consumers' rights are generally not compromised, health-care workers' privacy and safety are accommodated, and organisations and employers meet their obligations under both the Health and Safety at Work Act (2015) and the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights Regulations (1996).

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**Mission statement**

NZNO is committed to the representation of members and the promotion of nursing and midwifery. NZNO embraces Te Tiriti o Waitangi and works to improve the health status of all peoples of Aotearoa/ New Zealand through participation in health and social policy development.

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