

Position Statement: Name badges details for Health care workers, 2021

Introduction

In Aotearoa New Zealand, most healthcare working environments require staff to wear some form of identification, usually name badges that can be viewed by health consumers and their families or whānau. A range of issues need to be taken into account when deciding the appropriate level of personal information being displayed.

Definition

For the purpose of this document, the words “name badge” refers to a badge usually worn by the healthcare 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.

It does 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.

Discussion

Health Consumers

In Aotearoa 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. Further, there is evidence of the importance of healthcare workers' surnames being displayed to ensure health consumers can identify and connect with their carers through Whanaungatanga (Ka'ai & Higgins, 2004, (pp.13-25).

Māori worldview

NZNO recognises the needs and rights of health consumers to be able to identify their health care workers and to be able to practice using a te Ao Māori worldview including concepts of Whakawhanaungatanga and Manaakitanga to promote health and wellbeing.

Whakawhanaungatanga is a very useful and valuable concept to develop in nursing practice to introduce, connect and build a trusted relationship with patients and their whānau.

Whakawhanaungatanga uses whakapapa to connect with health consumers so that they know who their healthcare workers or carers are and where they are from. Shortening full names may be seen as dishonouring the people or tupuna that went before and as such may be considered disrespectful of their memory.

Health Workers

The unintended consequence of displaying healthcare workers full identification details may, in certain circumstances, contribute to those workers' safety and privacy being put at risk.

According to Richardson, Grainger, Ardagh and Morrison (2018) in Aotearoa New Zealand, figures indicated a marked increase in healthcare workers reporting of violent and/or threatening incidents since 2012 and that these incidences are still likely to be under-reported.

International evidence indicates displaying comprehensive identification details puts healthcare 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) 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 healthcare worker may include the healthcare workers' wider social, professional, or personal groups. Healthcare 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 Aotearoa 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 recognises that the needs and rights of health consumers to be able to identify their carers and be able to use Whakawhanaungatanga to engage and connect via whakapapa with them, must be balanced with the needs and rights of healthcare 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.

NZNO is committed to te Tiriti o Waitangi and our aim to enhance the health and wellbeing of all people of Aotearoa New Zealand. 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 (whānau) - of staff's safety, health and wellbeing are considered equally. The process must recognise that threats to a staff member's safety, health and wellbeing 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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