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Report on the provincial consultative meeting held on 03 March 2023

At the National Service Platform Sub-Committee meeting held on 22 February 2023, it was resolved that further consultation should be held with provincial stakeholders on the following matters related to the National Nurses Uniform Policy:

1. The wearing of head scarves on duty. The concern was that there are some religions (such as Islam) require women to wear headscarves. The concern was the possibility of lawsuits due to the policy infringing on an individual's freedom of religion.
2. The wearing of traditional adornments while on duty. These adornments include beaded necklaces and bracelets of various kinds.

The consultation meeting was held virtually on 03 March 2023. All provinces were represented and the meeting was attended by more than 200 participants.

The proposed way forward by participants was that:

1. The wearing of head scarves would not be allowed.

- The primary argument against allowing headscarves was that various religious groups use different coloured headscarves, the colours of which are just as significant as wearing the headscarf. Participants felt strongly that as soon as headscarves are allowed for religious reasons, all other colour scarves would have to be allowed too. Therefore, wearing of headscarves was vetoed because it would prevent the standardisation of uniform, which is one of the hallmarks of the policy.
- Secondly, the nurse professionals attending all supported a uniform that would raise the image of the nurse and that standardisation is the way to do so.

On consultation with labour relations, it was established that;

1. Individuals are not prevented from their religious beliefs but that an employer has the right to develop behaviour parameters in places of employment.
2. In addition, the rights of patients in health establishments is weighed against individual and personnel rights.

A way forward was that where nurses needed to wear a headscarf, they could wear the scarf from home to work and, at the end of the shift, from work to home.

2. Traditional adornments

- Nurses are allowed to wear their traditional adornments on condition that they are not visible.
- The argument against allowing traditional adornments to be visible was for Infection Prevention and Control reasons, as it would pose a risk in spreading infections.

A way forward was that nurses could wear their traditional adornments if they are not visible. Where it was imperative that they have to make it visible they would be able to wear the adornments from home to work and at the end of the shift, from work home.

Compiled by V Taschl:



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