

Australian College of Perioperative Nurses (ACORN)

Statement regarding cloth headwear in the perioperative environment

ACORN's vision for our patients is for them to receive the safest and highest quality perioperative care in the world. The ACORN *Standards for Perioperative Nursing in Australia* (the Standards) constitute a collection of the best evidence-based practice available at the time of review and are a resource for all perioperative staff to use in determining safe practice within their units.

Although the ACORN standards are not upheld by legislation, they are developed by a dedicated team of professionals who use rigorous methods to research and develop the information included within the Standards.

The ACORN Standards Committee and ACORN Board of Directors have recently received many queries, comments and feedback regarding the use of cloth headwear in the operating theatre environment.

The ACORN standard 'Perioperative attire' gives direction for implementing and evaluating practice regarding wearing perioperative attire including head covers, two-piece scrub suits, warm-up jackets and cover gowns. The principle on which this standard is based relates to the viable infectious organisms that can be dispersed from the skin and hair of perioperative personnel onto aseptic fields and into patients. The use of perioperative attire is a means to mitigate this potential for environmental contamination and thereby promote a safe environment of care.

The 'Perioperative attire' standard states that:

- Personnel have a duty to demonstrate that cloth head covers meet the relevant Australian standards for perioperative attire textiles, labelling and laundering. (Standard statement 2.6)
- The health service organisation has a duty to, if woven fabric hats are permitted, develop local policies regarding their use and maintenance in order to ensure the required Australian standards for health care textiles, surgical attire, labelling and laundering are met. (Standard statement 2.10)

The Australian standards referred to in these two statements are the AS 3789.3:1994 'Textiles for health care facilities and institutions - Apparel for operating theatre staff' and AS/NZ 4146:2000 'Laundry practice', both published by Standards Australia. Standards Australia was established in 1922 and is recognised through a memorandum of understanding with the Australian government as the peak, non-government body for standards development in Australia.

The development of these standards is not governed by ACORN and thus ACORN cannot change their content. ACORN can only make reference to the content of these standards so end users are aware that they exist.

ACORN will continue to advise the perioperative community about the existence of these Standards Australia standards and refer to their content until these standards are revised or revoked. ACORN's aim in producing *Standards for Perioperative Nursing in Australia* is to support the perioperative nursing profession to provide care for patients that is safe and of high quality. This statement addresses not the use of cloth headwear in the perioperative environment but rather the laundering practices for the cloth headwear. Correct laundering is vital to ensure the headwear is clean for each use since it is not disposed of at the end of the day or list.

We would welcome being informed of research about perioperative attire that supports different practices to those recommended in the Standards, research into not only the use of cloth headwear but also the fabric used for it and laundering requirements. Evidence from such research can be submitted via the ACORN Standards website at www.acorn.org.au/standards/about-standards/.

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2014–2018 Standards Committee Chair and ACORN Director (Queensland).

Sarah Bird

2016–2018 ACORN President

ACORN Position Statement Cloth Headwear May 2018.