

THE OPHTHALMOLOGIST'S ATTIRE AND PATIENT PERCEPTION OF QUALITY CARE AT AN ACADEMIC INSTITUTION

Alexander Intagliata, Varun Jeevan, Lea Khoukaz, Jared Alt (Presenter), Alexander Miller MD, Geetha Davis MD
University of Missouri Department of Ophthalmology

Background

Quality of care (QOC) measured by conventional metrics and patient perceptions of QOC are often incongruent. Here, we determine whether there is an association between how ophthalmologists dress and the perception of QOC at a large academic facility.

Purpose

The aim of this study is to evaluate patients' preferences of their ophthalmologist's attire in different settings (clinic, surgery, etc.).

Methods

A convenience sample of individuals scheduled for an ophthalmology outpatient clinic visit were randomly given the opportunity to complete a brief survey in the waiting room, using validated images of different dress attire.



Results

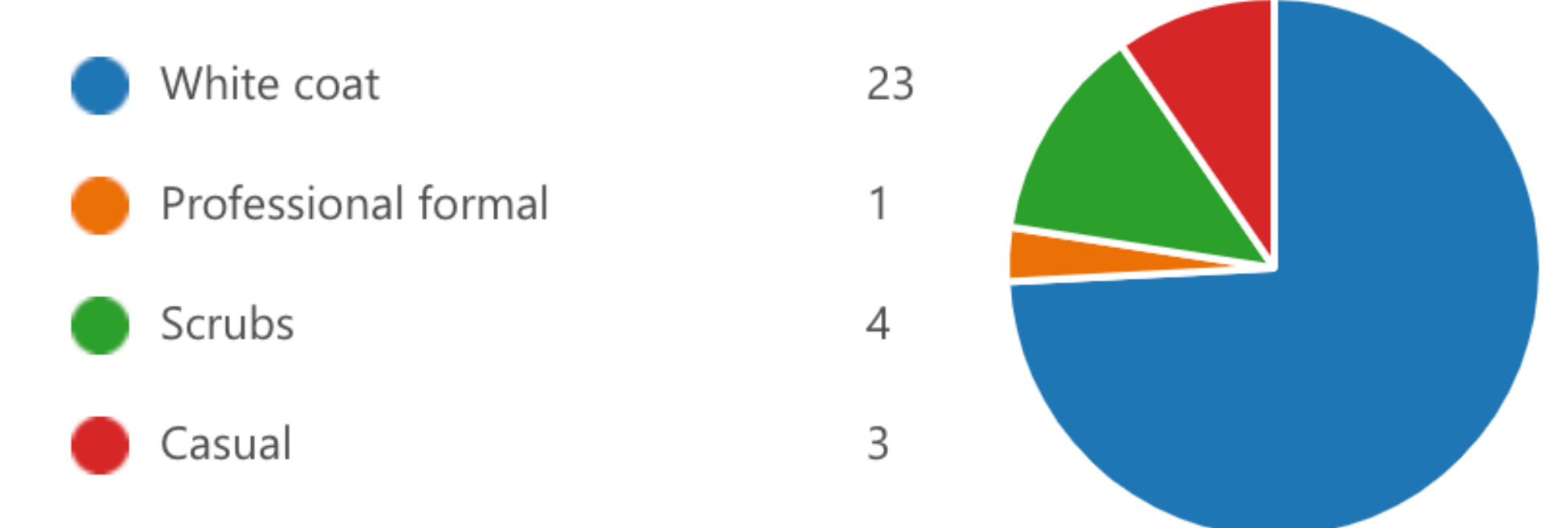
A. Which physician do you believe to be the most friendly, professional, and trustworthy?



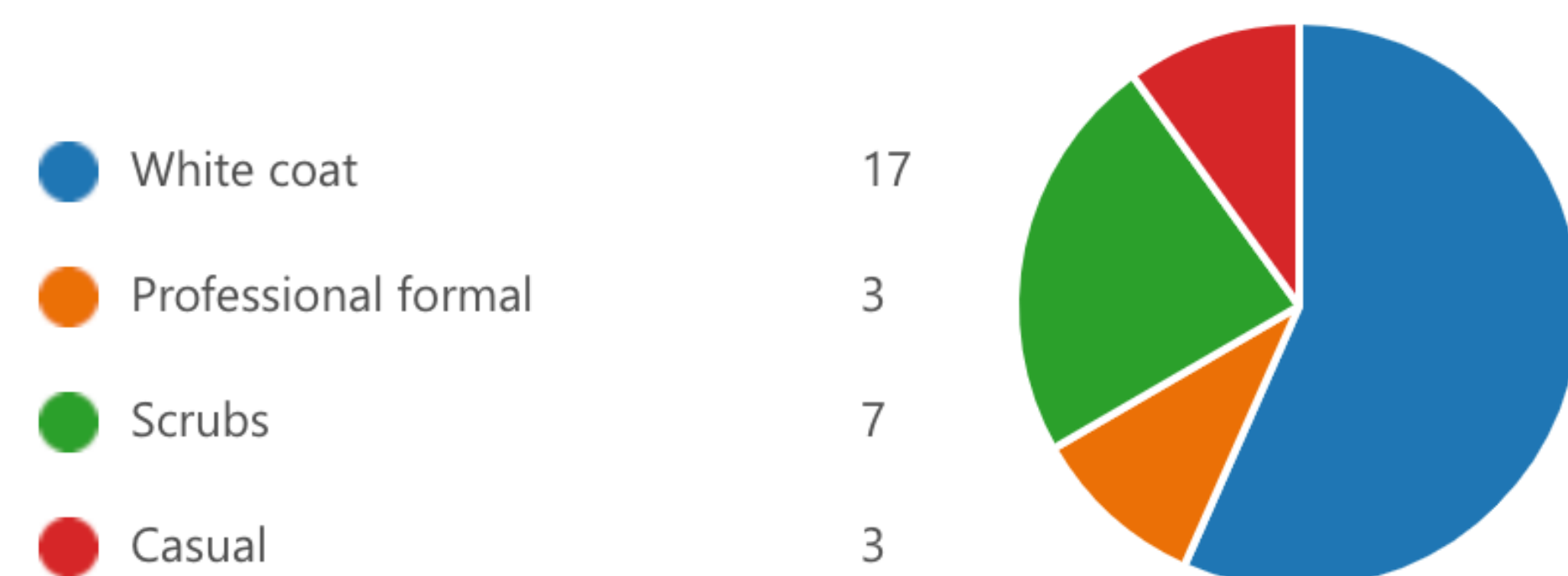
B. Which physician do you believe would be better accurately diagnosing your eye problems?



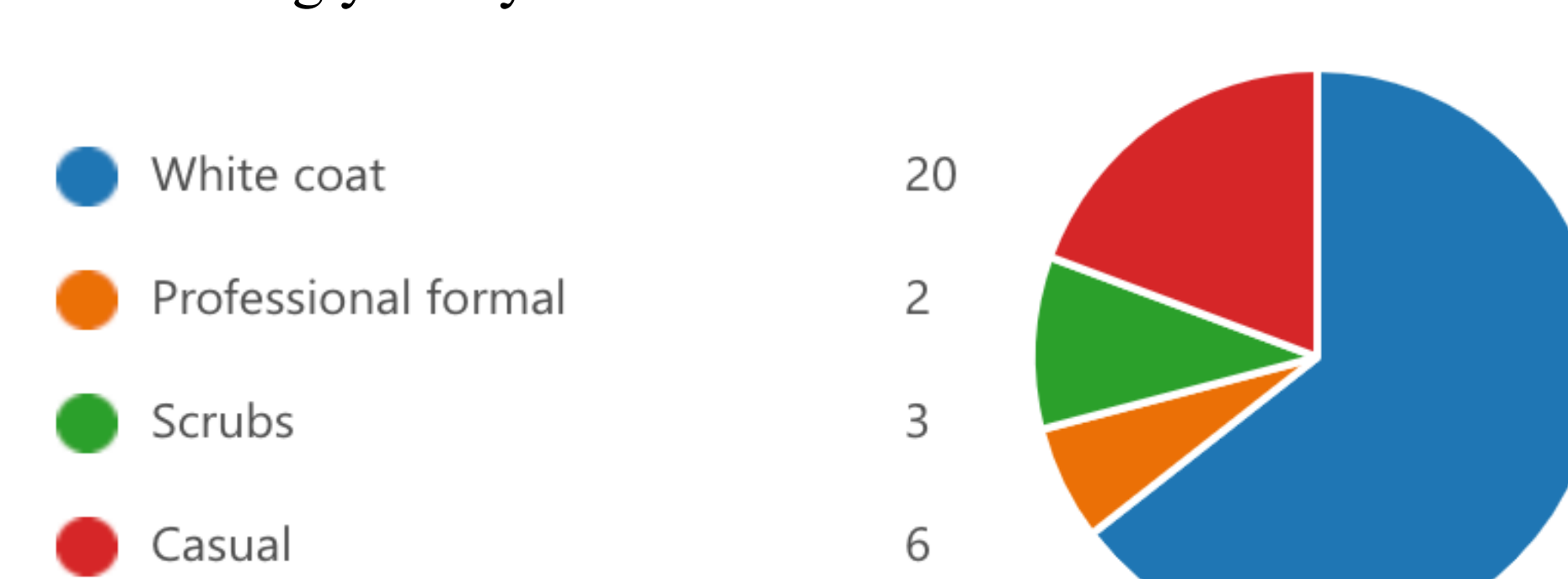
C. Which physician do you believe would be using the most up-to-date treatment to treat your eyes?



D. Which physician would you believe is more knowledgeable?



E. Which physician do you believe would be better at adequately addressing your eye concerns at an office visit?



F. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being not at all important and 5 being very important, rate the following:

Physician is dressed casually.	2.59
	Average Number
Physician is wearing formal attire.	1.79
	Average Number
Physician is wearing a white coat.	2.09
	Average Number

Figure 1. Responses obtained from survey participants. Nearly all 34 respondents were between 60-80 years old. 56% were female. 88% were white, while the remaining 12% were African-American, Hispanic/Latino, or Asian-American. 53% had a college/advanced degree, 26% high school/GED, and 21% with some college. 65% reporting a physician in a white coat would better address ophthalmic concerns in an office setting, with 57% believed a physician in a white coat is more knowledgeable (B, D). 65% of respondents preferred a white coat be worn to the clinic. Respondents overall rated the importance of wearing a white coat as 2.59 on a 5-point scale (F). A white coat was preferred by a 3-1 margin for friendliness, professionalism, and trustworthiness

Conclusions

The results in our study illustrate that a white coat is more preferred to other forms of attire. Interestingly, patients reported that a white coat was not necessarily important to them, but still preferred it to other dress forms presented. Although a physician who wears a white coat is preferred in our clinic at this institution, our conclusion may be influenced by unmeasured unique factors and may not necessarily be applicable to other settings. Other studies found similar findings.

References

- De Lott LB, Panarelli JF, Samimi D, Petrilli C, Snyder A, Kuhn L, Saint S, Chopra V, Whipple KM. Patient Preferences for Physician Attire in Ophthalmology Practices. *J Acad Ophthalmol* (2017). 2019 Jan;11(1):e36-e42. doi: 10.1055/s-0039-1688913. PMID: 31475243; PMCID: PMC6716523.
- Petrilli CM, Saint S, Jennings JJ, et al. Understanding patient preference for physician attire: a cross-sectional observational study of 10 academic medical centres in the USABMJ *Open* 2018;8:e021239. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2017-021239
- Guy Gherardi, James Cameron, Andrew West, Meg Crossley. A descriptive survey assessing patients' preference of doctors' attire in the hospital setting. *Clinical Medicine* Dec 2009, 9 (6) 519-524; DOI: 10.7861/clinmedicine.9-6-519
- Xun H, Chen J, Sun AH, Jenny HE, Liang F, Steinberg JP. Public Perceptions of Physician Attire and Professionalism in the US. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2021;4(7):e2117779. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.17779