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## FEATURES OF "RELEVANT" CHANGES IN MEDICAL STUDENTS APPEARANCE

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In a modern democratic society appearance has great importance. This is especially true of the dress code in health care sphere. More recently, changing your appearance by getting tattoos and body modifications has been decried by different generations in the medical community. However, what is significance of appearance of a medical officer during epidemiological instability around the world? The response to this question was given in our study. The objectives of the study are: to interrogate the attitude of medical university students to medical officers with tattoos as well as to identify medical students who are "exposed" to the fashionable trend of tattoos and body modifications. To implement these objectives, the study involved 106 medical students of various levels of degree and faculties of Rostov state medical University. The results of the study showed that the majority of medical students has not resorted to changes in their appearance, although tattoos and body modifications did not avoid the community of medical students

**Key words:** tattoos, body modifications, appearance, beauty, psychiatry, medicine.

## ОСОБЕННОСТИ «АКТУАЛЬНЫХ» ИЗМЕНЕНИЙ ВНЕШНОСТИ У СТУДЕНТОВ-МЕДИКОВ

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В современном демократичном обществе внешнему виду придается большое значение. Особенно это касается дресс-кода в медицинской деятельности. Еще совсем недавно изменение своего облика посредством татуировок и бодмода в медицинском сообществе порицалось разными поколениями. Однако насколько значима внешность медицинского работника во время эпидемиологической нестабильности во всем мире? Ответ на данный вопрос был освещен в нашей работе. Задачами исследования стали: изучение отношения студентов медицинского университета к медицинским работникам с татуировками, а также выявление студентов-медиков, «подверженных» модной тенденции татуировок и бодмода. Для осуществления данных задач в исследовании приняли участие 106 студентов-медиков различных курсов и факультетов Федерального государственного бюджетного общеобразовательного учреждения высшего образования «Ростовский государственный медицинский университет» Министерства здравоохранения

Российской Федерации (ФГБОУ ВО РостГМУ Минздрава РФ). Результаты исследования показали, что большинство студентов-медиков не прибегали к изменениям своей внешности, хотя татуировки и бодмод не обошли стороной среду студентов-медиков.

**Ключевые слова:** татуировки, бодмод, внешность, красота, психиатрия, медицина.

**Relevance:** In the history of mankind, drawing various images on the body, scarring and punctures were popular among certain segments of the population, as well as among some ethnic groups and subcultures. This was not just a decoration of the body, but often an instrument of hierarchical classification [1, 2].

The authors think that body art has other aims in the 21st century. Thus, Borokhov A. claims that a tattoo reflects the selfhood of a person who wears it, and can also indicate the benchmarks of life values [3]. Despite the diversity of motives, changing your appearance, or the so-called "body modifications"<sup>1</sup>, can be psychopathological manifestations of personality [3, 4].

Most scientific articles describe the popularity of tattoos among young people aged 20 to 39 years [5, 6]. Thus, the surveys show that the elements of body art can reach 22 % (tattoos) and 51 % (piercings) among students [7, 8]. However, in spite of the "fashion trends", there are certain difficulties regarding the perception of a person who has tattoos on the visible parts of the body: these are both employment, and payment for a position in comparison with colleagues without tattoos, etc. [16].

Today, both in foreign and domestic literature, considerable attention is paid to the attitude of patients to health professionals with tattoos, piercings and other forms of body modifications [9, 10–12, 13, 14, 15]. The authors attribute this to issues of ethics and deontology, dress code in medicine, the relationship of legal aspects with the border of personal freedom of citizens in the performance of their professional duties [12, 15].

**Goal:** to determine the relevance of the topic of tattoos and body modifications among medical students.

**Objectives:** in our study, we decided to find out how students of a multinational medical University attitude to health professionals with tattoos, and as well as figure out how many medical students were "exposed" to the fashionable trend of tattoos and body modifications in the variety of forms.

**Sources and methods:** 106 medical students of various levels of degree and faculties of "Rostov state medical University" (RostGMU) participated in the survey. 85 females and 21 males. The average age of the respondents was 21. The study was conducted using the author's polling in the form of a voluntary questionnaire in the intermediate training cycle. Statistical processing was carried out by primary and secondary analysis, using the MS Excel 2003 program.

**Research results:** more than a third of the respondents (38 persons – 35.85 %) showed a positive attitude to health professionals with tattoos. In the gender samples, the percentage of the responses was almost the same (35.29 % females and 38.10 % males). Only 4 respondents (3.77 %) indicated a negative attitude, two representatives of each sex (2.35 % females and 9.52 % males). More than a half of the respondents demonstrated a neutral attitude to tattooed health professionals (64 respondents – 60.38 %; 62.35 % females, 52.38 % males).

As for medical students, 8 out of 10 students (83.96 %) boasted of having no tattoos. The percentage of females was slightly higher (85.8 % females and 76 % males).

Almost a half of the respondents (54.7 %) is not willing to get tattoos (57.6 % females and 42.8 % males). At the same time, almost a third of the respondents (29 %) showed various reasons: "I think that it is not beautiful", "I did not come up with a design", "I love my body as it is", "there is no possibility", "parents are against", "I am afraid of complications, in particular infections", "for religious reasons".

In our sample, 17 persons (16.04 %) have tattoos on their bodies. The percentage of males in the gender sample exceeded the number of females by more than twice (9.6 % females and 23.8 % males). Obtained percentage is almost a half higher than the result of the VCIOM<sup>2</sup> polling.

The average age of the first tattoo among females was 18, and among males-17.

For their first tattoo, the vast majority of the respondents of both sexes chose different parts of their upper and lower limbs (5.8 % females and 9.5 % males). Females tried to choose invisible under medical clothing parts of the body: back, collarbones, ribs, buttocks. The preferences of males were different (according to the degree of visibility under medical clothing): under the lip, on the chest, on the mons pubis.

The number of tattoos among the respondents was ambiguous. 4.7 % females had more than 1 tattoo (the maximum number – 6, the minimum number – 2). From the first to the next tattoo, it took an average of 3 months to 3 years. It is interesting to note that males contented themselves with only one tattoo.

According to the frequent images of females tattoos in the first place were images of animals, on the second – inscriptions, on the third – flowers. Then there were images of heart symbol, Eastern mandala, human silhouette, ECG. Inscriptions were also popular among males. The others put their own date of birth, caduceus, and revolver on the body.

<sup>1</sup> Body modification (eng.) is a deliberate change in a person's anatomy or appearance. Thompson T., Black S. Forensic Human Identification: An Introduction (2010).

<sup>2</sup> The VCIOM survey was conducted over the phone on 09/07/2019. 1.6 thousand Russian citizens over the age of 18 took part in the survey. According to the survey, 11% of the respondents have tattoos. Link to the source: <https://wciom.ru/index.php?id=236&uid=9816>

Two-thirds of the respondents (64.7 % of the sample with tattoos) made sense of their first tattoo. Gender samples in this issue had almost no differences in the percentage ratio. The next tattoos carried sense for absolutely everyone who made them. The motives for re-tattooing varied: for some respondents it was a new stage in life (and the end of a difficult period of life), and someone "got a new sketch".

We are also interested in the quantity of the respondents from the general sample willing to experiment with their appearance and what they put into this concept. Out of the total number of the respondents, one third agreed (31.13 %). The percentage of males and females varied slightly (31.76 % females and 28.57 % males). The vast majority would be happy to change their hairstyle (haircut and hair dye). Also, the respondents would like to change their appearance by: piercing getting, changing the style of clothing, makeup, and so on.

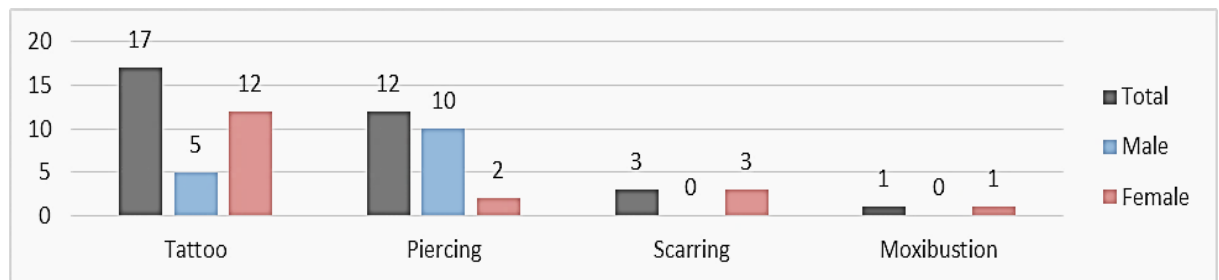
Among the respondents were those who have repeatedly been changing their appearance. The hairstyle changing was the most popular. In the second place was the piercing. Almost every tenth respondent

(11 %) got it. The percentage of males and females varied slightly (11.76 % females and 9,5 % males). Further in the column "changes in appearance" were the answers: weight loss, installation of orthodontic braces, lip augmentation, changing the shape of the nose.

Assuming to see "piercing" in the answers, we were asked about the commitment to body modifications.

Knowing the term "body modification" was confirmed by almost a third of the respondents (including gender samples (30 %; 29 % of the sample of females and 33.3 % of the sample of males).

Adherence to body modifications was noted by 14 % of the respondents. The percentage of the sample of females was one-third higher than the sample of males (15 % females and 9.5 % males). Medical students described the following types of body modifications: piercing (mentioned above), scarring, and moxibustion (in a particular case, with a cigarette). A single case in the sample of females with preferences for both piercing and scarring (1.17 % females) should be noted.



We asked to list the motives that prompted them to try these types of body transformations. We received the following responses: "because I can", "because of the desire to solve personal problems", "I liked watching the process", "it's nice for me", "interesting and beautiful", "I liked it + such a form of sadism drowned anxiety", "at first it was interesting, then I liked it", "curiosity", "just wished to do that" etc. Significantly, the responses of females were more focused on the affectivity than males.

The end of our study came at the beginning of an increased epidemiological threshold in the Russian Federation. We decided to repeat the survey on some issues among medical students in remote mode 3 weeks later the introduction of the self-isolation regime of citizens by the Presidents of the Russian Federation. As a result, we received exactly the same response from all 106 respondents: a neutral attitude towards health professionals with tattoos. The number of people who want to change their body has not been changed. This allows us to speak about the far-fetched problems of the appearance of a health professional that arise in modern society, especially when it comes to large-scale catastrophes and disasters.

**Conclusion:** Today, most of the young people of our University prefer not to make significant changes to their body and appearance, although tattoos and other forms of body modifications have not avoided the community of medical students. It should be noted that during the period of high epidemiological readiness, the "common sense" of health professionals' appearance has lost its significance, since the priority is to save human lives.

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