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## CRITICAL THINKING

### Matt Morgan: Walking the green five miles

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The currency that brings joy as a doctor has seemingly changed over time. While the thought of long lunches on the golf course is long gone, so too are the necessities to keep you sane when working in a system as stretched as Donald Trump's truths.

Nowadays, the things I aspire to most are a parking space, a password I can remember, and some scrubs that fit. On this last point, most hospitals seem to have forgotten that the average scrub wearer is, well, average. The predictable empty racks of scrubs in the middle portion of a bell shaped sizing curve are not a great start to the day. Apart from today.

To avoid looking like an extra in an MC Hammer video by using the only size available (XXL), I opted for a different coloured uniform. Gone was the pale powder blue worn by surgeons, anaesthetists, and my ICU colleagues. Instead I wore the emerald green scrubs used by staff working in the wheelhouse of medicine: the healthcare assistants. It radically changed the course of my day.

Each step in the five miles I walked on that shift was subtly different from usual. In some ways better, in some ways worse. As I left the changing room, I was stopped mid-stride to help move a patient off a bed and onto a theatre trolley. Then a visitor asked me the way to the canteen. Soon another member of staff gestured to me to hold open the doors while an x ray machine was guided through.

I was late for handover as a result. But that was fine. I suddenly felt useful in a very practical way. Not through a prescription, or through talking, or through medical procedures. I could use my body, my mind, and my experience to materially affect the lives of others. Not that this doesn't happen in my usual blue scrubs, but it's less common and with less expectation.

However, just as the thicker material of the green top was less kind to my skin, so too were some of the subtle changes I noticed in others' behaviour. A busy, suited professional slipped in front of me at the queue for lunch. Medical teams strode down the corridor, filling its width with their bodies and loud conversations, leaving me to squeeze past, skirting the wall. I was repeatedly asked why I was walking into wards—places that are normally very pleased to see an ICU consultant.

We work not just in a multidisciplinary team but in a multi-dressed team. Other professions distinguish roles by using subtle badges, motifs, or military stripes. The bold uniforms in healthcare are seen from afar. This has its advantages, but it needs further thought. It's not the visibility of the uniform that's the problem but the way we treat the person in it.

Perhaps this is not even a problem that needs to be solved, but rather one that we should all experience. Rather than stepping into the shoes of others you work with, try wearing their scrubs for a day. It may change how others treat you—and, in turn, how you treat others.

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