

## Overview of the Evidence Base

What do millennial patients and clinicians want from primary care?

Spring 2021

As part of the Ardmore Institute of Health-funded project “What do millennial patients and clinicians want from primary care?” the Primary Care Collaborative reviewed existing evidence around millennial (born 1981-1996) patients’ and clinicians’ perceptions of primary care.

### *Search methodology:*

- Google scholar search
- Search terms: “millennials” AND “primary care”; “millennials” AND “primary care clinicians”; “millennials” AND “primary care patients”; “millennials” AND “health care”; “generational differences in primary care”

### **Primary Care Patients:**

- Cangelosi J, Kim D, Griffin K, Ranelli E. Comparison of Millennials, Generation X, and Baby Boomers Attitudes Toward Preventive Health Information: A Social Media Emphasis. University of Central Arkansas. 2020.  
[https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1308&context=ama\\_proceedings](https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1308&context=ama_proceedings)

#### **Findings:**

- Millennials dislike checkups, want low cost health care, and greatly value convenience in getting health care
- Millennials are tech savvy when it comes to searching for health care information
- They tend to be more self-reliant than other generations
  - 38 percent trust their peers more than medical professionals
  - 55 percent believe the health care information they find online is more reliable than their doctor
  - They have the lowest satisfaction rates for doctors
- To reach millennials, health care marketers are challenged to find the right mode of communication, including social media, podcasts, blogs, and other digital technologies

- Blue Cross Blue Shield, The Health of America Report. The Health of Millennials. (Apr 24, 2019).  
<https://www.bcbs.com/the-health-of-america/reports/the-health-of-millennials>

#### **Findings:**

- Many millennials are foregoing primary care even though studies suggest that they are less healthy than their Generation X counterparts were at the same age.
  - Compared to Generation X, millennials have a substantially higher prevalence for 8 out of 10 top health conditions, including major depression, hyperactivity, and type II diabetes.
  - 68% of millennials have a PCP
  - Only 55% of individuals age 18-29 had a PCP in 2019.
- Major declines in health usually begin around age 27.
- Total adverse health for millennial women is 20% larger than for men, largely due to depression, type II diabetes, and endocrine conditions.

- Fronstin P, Dretzka E. Consumer Engagement in Health Care Among Millennials, Baby Boomers, and Generation X: Findings from the 2017 Consumer Engagement in Health Care Survey. *Employee Benefit Research Institute*. 2018;444.

**Findings:**

- Baby Boomers and Millennials have higher health coverage satisfaction rates than Gen Xers
- Millennials are slightly more satisfied with the out-of-pocket costs of their plans
- Millennials are more likely than Baby Boomers and Gen Xers to be extremely or very satisfied with the ease of selecting a health plan; the information available to help understand health plan choices; the number of health plans to choose from; and the availability of affordable health plans
  - May be because of their comfort in researching consumer decisions online
- Millennials with PCPs are more likely to report that their PCP does not have the expertise to deal with complex health issues, and that they rely on themselves more than their PCP to make medical decisions
- Millennials have the highest rates of wellness program participation
- Millennials were less likely to say they have completed a health risk assessment or biometric screenings
- Millennials and Gen Xers were more likely to report that a telemedicine options is extremely or very important
- An open question is whether the way Millennials engage with the health care system changes as they age, and as a higher percentage of them move away from being dependents on their parents' plans

- Glauser W. Primary Care System Outdated and Inconvenient for Many Millennials. *CMAJ*. 2018;190 (48) E1430-E1431; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.109-5688>

**Findings:**

- About 33% of millennials do not have family physicians, compared to 15% for people aged 50-64.
- Millennials move frequently for work or studies, which can make building a relationship with a family doctor difficult.
- Younger people tend to see medical care for acute rather than chronic issues.

- Sanborn BJ. Millennials Demand Telehealth in a Move Away from Traditional Primary Care Model. 2018. *Healthcare IT News*. <https://www.healthcareitnews.com/news/millennials-demand-telehealth-move-away-traditional-primary-care-model>

**Findings:**

- Convenience and access are prized by millennials, with telehealth, retail, and urgent care growing in popularity.
  - 30% of millennials have used a walk-in clinic compared to only 14% of baby boomers
- 40% of millennials report that telemedicine is an extremely or very important option.
- Millennials are more likely to show around and research healthcare options and cost information before choosing a provider.

- Speer L. Connecting with Millennial Patients. *Dimensions of Dental Hygiene*. 2018. [https://dimensionsofdentalhygiene.com/amp/article/connecting-with-millennial-patients/?page&post\\_type=article&article=connecting-with-millennial-patients](https://dimensionsofdentalhygiene.com/amp/article/connecting-with-millennial-patients/?page&post_type=article&article=connecting-with-millennial-patients)

### **Findings:**

- Valuing Millennials' opinions and autonomy regarding their health care decisions may greatly improve adherence to treatment recommendations.
- Technology-driven practices incorporating online evidence-based patient education can enhance patient knowledge and may improve adherence with treatment plans and self care.
- Suggestions for establishing rapport with millennial patients:
  - Be aware of health issues specific to millennials.
  - Tailor communications into short segments with a respectful tone, providing regular feedback.
  - Show appreciation for cultural diversity and learn health care beliefs specific to patients' cultural backgrounds to build trust.
  - Demonstrate patience and provide feedback.
  - Include patients in treatment decisions, having them share what does and does not work for them and tailoring recommendations based on their preferences.

- Cowan M. Millennial Transformation for Primary Care. *Military Medicine*. 2010: 175(6):379-81. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20572466/>

### **Findings:**

- Millennials are shifting primary care away from a paternalistic approach toward knowledge, power, and decision-making in the hands of patients, driven by two forces:
  - Internet-based information technology
    - The knowledge gap between patients and clinicians has shrunk dramatically; no need to rely solely on health system or physicians for knowledge and decisions
    - Virtual groups multiply consumer market power
  - Millennial generational behaviors
    - Unique characteristics which are changing the dynamics of the healthcare system:
      - Internet information gathering skills
      - Comfort with virtual relationships
      - Intolerance for delay; desire for instant feedback
      - Social network adoption
      - Self-empowered and skeptical of authority

### **Primary Care Clinicians:**

- Park J, Blatt B, Greenberg L. Does Millennial Students' High Expression of Empathy Correlate with Their Choice of Primary Care Residencies? *South Med J*. 2021 Jan; 114(1):8-12. <https://sma.org/southern-medical-journal/article/does-medical-students-high-expression-of-empathy-correlate-with-their-choice-of-primary-care-residencies/>

- **Results:** A total of 593 (77.5%) MS3s had mean IRI scores of 45.1 (standard error 4.8), higher than a recent study involving MS. There were no significant differences between patient- and technology-oriented specialties (-0.65 to 0.88), primary care versus surgical residencies (-0.87 to 1.4), and women versus men (-0.20 to 1.4). Our study did not clarify previous conflicting studies in the literature.
- **Conclusions:** There are no significant differences in expression of empathy in GWU students who chose patient- versus technology-oriented and primary care versus surgical residencies. The authors can only speculate why students' high expression of empathy was not associated with selecting

primary care residencies, namely, women are outnumbering men entering medicine and are selecting technology-related specialties previously identified predominantly with men, and millennials have specific traits inherent in their generation that can affect their specialty choice. The results of our study shed doubt that the theoretical construct linking MS high empathy expression and choice of primary care careers is valid today.

- Caramanzana H. Millennial Nurses Connecting with Patients. *Nurse Leader*. 2020; (18)1:25-29. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mnl.2019.09.019>

**Abstract:**

Millennial nurses are the largest cohort in the profession reporting burnout and compassion fatigue. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore and identify what connecting with patients means to millennial nurses. Eight themes emerged in the analysis of the data collected: The Void: Into the Darkness; Unconnected: Unable to Find the Light; Uncomfortable: Patients as Strangers; Art of Caring: Not a Priority; Becoming: Real RN; Fulfillment: Receiving through Giving; Enlightenment: Turning on the Light; and Guidance: Educational Needs. The themes shed light on the phenomenon of how millennial nurses connect with patients.

**Findings:**

- Increased time away from the hospital bedside has created moral distress among nurses who struggle to find the balance between administrative duties and providing quality nursing care.
  - Themes and critical elements identified from interviews:
    - Uneasiness, unawareness of the need for connecting with patients by expressing empathy and compassion—just completing the technical tasks of nursing care.
    - Possible alienation from the essence of nursing and feelings of guilt of a job not completed.
    - Painful feelings when engaging in face-to-face communication with patients outside pertinent questions regarding physical care.
    - The essence of the profession is sacrificed when too many administrative tasks are assigned to 1 nurse. The priority for millennial nurses is to complete the technical tasks at the expense of communication of empathy and compassion.
    - The feeling of the essence of the nursing profession creates joy from within oneself.
    - Passionate association of communicating empathy and compassion to patients and one's own well-being.
    - Education and focus on how to communicate empathy and compassion in a challenging health care environment is needed.
    - Educational needs during nursing school and during transition to practice.
- Anath V. "Addressing the Needs of the Millennial Physician." *MedCity News*. (Jan 17, 2020). <https://medcitynews.com/2020/01/addressing-the-needs-of-the-millennial-physician/?rf=1>

**Findings:**

- Millennial clinicians have different expectations than their predecessors when it comes to data access, transparency, and seamless experiences.
  - 83% of millennial general practitioners see digital healthcare services as enablers to these expectations.
- Today, there are additional pressures for PCPs to be better informed, better connected, and better engaged with patients.
- 89% of millennial GPs in the US and the UK say that it is difficult to spend enough time with patients to allow enough insight to make a diagnosis due to administrative burden.

- 82% of millennial GPs in the same survey said that they want to drive change in the healthcare sector to enhance care outcomes.

➤ Surani Z. 2019. Motivators and Challenges Among Millennial Primary Care Physicians: A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Study. *ProQuest*.

<https://media.proquest.com/media/hms/PFT/2/vHgCB?s=BmvzKrNEOmV4AZ5q5X7qNEht%2FJU%3D>

**Findings:**

- Personal and professional characteristics of millennials are shaping their decisions about the type of medicine they want to pursue.
- Study results have shown that over 75% of physicians responded they would not advise primary care as a career choice.
- One study showed that millennials value a “four-dimensional work structure,” consisting of professional growth, personal growth, comfort and security, and the work environment.
- Millennial PCP job satisfaction factors: flexible work schedule, work-life balance, skills development, sense of achievement, autonomy/self-determination, receiving feedback, work environment and support, and career advancement.
- Motivators to work as a PCP: building long-term relationships, presence of a mentor, experience during medical residence, and work-family life balance.
- Reasons to discontinue work as a PCP: no “thrill” factor, monotonous routine, used as a stepping-stone to be becoming a specialist, negative experience during medical residence, negative perceptions about primary care, not enough reimbursement for PCP, regulations and administrative burden.
- Factors leading to shortage of PCPs: inadequate career preparation/awareness, regulatory burdens, perceived low remuneration, and demographic changes.
- Policy interventions to ensure PCP survival: policy and legislative changes, increase number of residencies, more incentives and adequate compensation, support and recognition, collaboration with learning institutions, creating a professional identity, and limitation on mid-level care (NPs and PAs).

➤ Strachan M. Are Millennial Clinicians the Key to Better Healthcare? *Trapollo*. 2019.

<https://www.trapollo.com/are-millennial-clinicians-the-key-to-better-healthcare/>

**Findings:**

- Some reports have found that millennial physicians report having greater interest in adopting new care-delivery models and have more comfort and experience sharing data and information—also recognizing the importance of EHRs and telehealth applications.
  - 62% of millennial physicians surveyed said that EHRs are an important component of quality healthcare.
- Millennial clinicians tend to value staffing flexibility and work/life balance.

➤ Auerbach D, Buerhaus P, Staiger DO. Millennials Almost Twice as Likely to be Registered Nurses as Baby Boomers Were. *Health Affairs*. 2017; 36(10).

<https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.2017.0386>

**Abstract:**

- Baby-boomer registered nurses (RNs), the largest segment of the RN workforce from 1981 to 2012, are now retiring. This would have led to nurse shortages but for the surprising embrace of the profession by millennials—who are entering the nurse workforce at nearly double the rate of the

boomers. Still, the boomers' retirement will reduce growth in the size of the RN workforce to 1.3 percent per year for the period 2015–30.

**Findings:**

- Coming of age in a time of economic uncertainty and earnings instability may have contributed to millennials' interest in nursing, as RNs have stable lifetime earnings and low rates of unemployment.
- The average millennial is about twice as likely to become a nurse than baby boomers were.

- Twombly LA. Factors that Influence Job Choice at the Time of Graduation for Physician Assistants. *Seton Hall University*. 2017. <https://scholarship.shu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://scholar.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=3434&context=dissertations>

**Findings:**

- The percentage of PAs practicing in primary care has dramatically decreased in the past 15 years.
  - The percentage of PAs in primary care was greater than 50% in 1997 and only slightly above 30% in 2013.
  - A 2015 survey showed that 64.4% of students entering a PA program indicated an intention to practice in primary care compared to only 27.6% of recently certified PAs in a clinical position working in primary care.
  - Only 29% of medical graduates in 2012 responded that they were planning to practice in primary care.
- Factors determining specialty choice in the medical field:
  - Individual factors: demographic factors, personal values
  - Program factors: faculty and preceptors, mentorship, institutional influence
  - External factors: job availability, income potential

- Duffrin C, Cashion M, Cummings DM, Whetstone L, Firnhaber J, Levine G, Watson R, Lambert A. Generational Differences in Practice Site Selection Criteria Amongst Primary Care Physicians. *Marshall Journal of Medicine*. 2016;2(1):9. <http://mds.marshall.edu/mjm/vol2/iss1/9>.

**Findings:**

- While slight differences between generations did exist, the overall choices for choosing a site remained stable across generations
  - Factors remained remarkably similar across different specialties, family situations, genders, and ethnic groups
- Most important reasons across generations:
  1. Personality of the practice
  2. Opportunity to practice comprehensive care
  3. On-call responsibilities
  4. Location
  5. Practice type
  6. Benefits
- Personality of the practice ranked in the top three for all generations and was particularly important for younger physicians

- Aaron M, Levenberg P. The Millennials in medicine: Tips for Teaching the Next Generation of Physicians. *Journal of Academic Ophthalmology*. 2014;7:e77-20. <https://www.thieme-connect.com/products/ejournals/pdf/10.1055/s-0034-1396088.pdf>

**Findings:**

- It is essential to create a culture of feedback from the first day in the residency program
- Millennials are explorative, experiential, hands-on learners, who learn better by discovery than being told
- Their notions of teamwork, technological acumen, and generosity will be beneficial to older physicians and the changing health care environment

- Spector ND, Cull W, Daniels SR, Gilhooly J, Hall J, Horn I, Marshall SG, Schumacher DJ, Sectish TC, Stanton BF. Gender and Generational Influences on the Pediatric Workforce and Practice. *Pediatrics* June 2014, 133 (6) 1112-1121; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2013-3016>

**Findings:**

- Pediatrics has a higher proportion of female doctors than any other specialty in medicine, with the majority of pediatricians (57%) being women
- Women are much more likely to pursue and accept part-time positions
- Millennials share the perspective of life–work balance with Generation Xers and value social networking, collaboration, achievement, respect for their contributions, and advocacy for the environment and global community
- As practices expand the hours they are open to see patients, the value of a flexible workforce will increase and help retain pediatricians in the practice
- Millennial workers are likely to expect their work environment to be outfitted with an electronic medical record and smartphones and to use social media

- Pingleton SK. Millennial Health Care: Change You Can Believe in. 2012;142(1):22-29. <https://doi.org/10.1378/chest.11-3034>

**Findings:**

- Of the four generations, millennials are the only ones that do not cite “work ethic” as one of their principal claims to distinctiveness.
- Millennials care very strongly about work-life issues
- They are comfortable with and enjoy working with teams and teamwork
- Millennials learn differently. We must think outside of the box regarding education and focus on the learners.
- There are many more female millennial health care workers than in previous generations. However, in one of five medical schools, women departures exceed new hires, and at every academic level there are more women in the clinical sciences than the basic sciences
  - Young female clinicians (40%) are electing to work part-time
- The percentage of physician practices owned by hospitals has more than doubled, increasing from 20% to over 50%.