



WHITE PAPER

Millennial parents:

Challenging conventional expectations of pediatric care

Millennials are a confounding yet highly researched generation. Further muddying our understanding of them, Millennials who become parents rarely adhere to preconceived Millennial stereotypes, even if they did exhibit particular traits before having children.

The buying habits, media consumption, and parenting philosophies of Millennial parents are very different than past generations. If we ignore the Millennials who have transitioned into parenthood, we could find ourselves channeling resources in the wrong direction. As the generation that now surpasses the baby boomers by a half million, they are destined to shake up healthcare.

As much as healthcare constituents want to understand, Millennials also seek to be understood. To better recognize where resources should be directed to support this growing population, it is important to first understand the “typical Millennial” and then their traits as they evolve into “Millennial parents.”

They are—and they aren't—who you think

Most people view Millennials as a generation that is tech-savvy, tolerant, entitled, and narcissistic. Seventy percent of this cohort will check their phones every hour.¹ As a grouping, Millennials are more likely to live at home with their parents into their 20s and 30s, tend to be less religious, and are more focused on their career than family.²

Society knows them as the “me” or “selfie” cohort but this behavior transcends a label within a generation. People of all generational ages are posting pictures of themselves and their family on social media. While most healthcare organizations think of this generation with negative attributes, a broader look is warranted.

Non-parent Millennials and healthcare

What is the impact of non-parent Millennials on healthcare today? Research from NRC Health's 2015 study, *The New Payer*, revealed that while Millennials do see health as incredibly important, they use more urgent care centers and are more willing to put off healthcare services. They see a stronger connection between their own personal decisions, behaviors, and health status.

Millennials select a physician based on reputation, and research the provider in advance. This research is not strictly limited to online—although over 77% start there.⁴ It also includes asking their own parents for advice and whom they most speak with daily.

Millennials want to feel personally connected with a brand in a context analogous to a friendship. They are the most loyal generation once the reciprocal worth of the organization has been established. Once vested, they see the value provided by the organization and remain loyal. However, until loyalty is established they will go anywhere for services.

This highly mobile generation is not looking for the most conveniently located facility. Millennials look for the best quality at a good price based on their research. They are willing to go farther than prior generations for services. On the other hand, Millennial parents think similarly to other generational cohorts when seeking serious treatment for their child—49.97% stated they would go over 100 miles for better value.⁵

22

Million Millennial parents

75.4

Million Millennials in the US

9,000

Babies born each day to Millennials

20–36

Millennials range in age³

1 Stein, J. (2013, May). Millennials: The Me Me Me Generation. Time Magazine. Retrieved from <http://time.com/247/millennials-the-me-me-me-generation/>

2 Fry, R. (2016, April) Millennials overtake Baby Boomers as America's largest generation. Fact Tank. Retrieved from: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/04/25/millennials-overtake-baby-boomers/>

3 Steinmetz, K. (2015, October) How Millennial Parents Think Differently About Raising Kids. Time Magazine. Retrieved from <http://time.com/4070021/millennial-parents-raising-kids-poll/>

4 New Payer Study, NRC Health 2015

5 NRC Health Market Insights Data (October/November 2016)

The perpetuation of Millennial “social” life

Millennial parents may act, think, behave, and consume differently than members within this same generational group without children, but a similarity between both groups is being more apt to use the internet as a first step to select a healthcare provider or hospital. Millennials rely on computers the way earlier generations used telephones. They are more comfortable looking to the Internet and social media for research, recommendations, and reviews.

Millennial parents are unique in their pursuit of pediatric hospital information. While they still become most familiar with hospitals through advertising and news, what sets them apart is a reliance on social media. Millennials will use social media to gather information before asking for a recommendation from a healthcare provider. For other generations, provider recommendations are still the first avenue used when seeking information about additional services needed.

Millennial parents are more likely to use web searches for hospitals (73 percent) or check rankings online (72 percent). Nearly one in four Millennial parents will not ask for a referral when selecting a pediatric hospital.⁶ Once satisfied with a decision based on their own research, they will go to the healthcare provider for confirmation of the information found.

Reaching Millennials means doubling-down on digital marketing given their strong focus on social media. Marketing departments should have a digital strategy to thrive with this segment of the population. Millennials are the first generational cohort to grow up with web ads tailored to them. As such, they expect a unique experience in both the outreach approach by organizations and information about services provided.

The rise of healthcare's newest parents

Millennials are socially conscious. They care about leaving a lasting impact on the world and frequently frequently adopt a healthy lifestyle. Fifty-two percent of Millennial parents state they monitor what their kids are eating.⁷ These parents want hospitals to offer services or classes on parenting, child development, and healthy living.

More than a fix or cure is needed for the children of Millennials. Their parents want services that address broader needs and prefer a hospital that works with the entire family. Millennial parents don't expect—or want—a healthcare provider to solve their problems. Instead, they seek tools to problem-solve themselves or in collaboration with the healthcare team.

While Millennials desire quality in their search for healthcare services, the Millennial parent places a strong emphasis on price as a component of value. Greater visibility to price transparency and quality data in healthcare is becoming important for Millennial parents. This shift in thinking also comes at a time when insurance carriers are changing their policies to requiring higher deductibles and copayments which results in higher out-of-pocket costs.

Data collected by NRC Health demonstrated a large spread in the funds Millennials have available when serious treatment is required for a child. Thirty-three percent of Millennial parents stated an ability to spend more than \$10,000, yet 13 percent had less than \$1,000 available. While Millennial parents are willing to pay more for quality services for their children the financial constraints can have them making their decisions at the margin.⁸

MILLENNIALS ARE:

- Among the earliest “digital natives”
- Interested in participating in your marketing
- Users and creators of content
- Seekers of adventure (often “safer” adventures)
- Striving for a healthy lifestyle
- Seeking peer affirmation
- Tied into social media rather than email at work
- Diverse within the cohort
- Embracers of authentic marketing and align to brands with a purpose
- Similar to older generations in many ways

(Fromm & Vidler, 2015)

6 Greene, J. (2015, October) Millennials' online shopping habits are changing health care marketing. Crain's Detroit Business. Retrieved from <http://www.craigslist.com/article/20151014/BLOG010/151019938/Millennials-online-shopping-habits-are-changing-health-care-marketing>

7 Fromm, J. (2013) New Research: “The Millennial Generation Becomes Parents.” Retrieved from <http://www.millennialmarketing.com/2013/07/new-research-the-millennial-generation-becomes-parents/>

8 NRC Health Market Insights Data (October/November 2016)

Millennial decision-making

Millennial parents consider key things before selecting a hospital— a strong brand image and reputation, highly qualified providers and nurses, and a “child friendly environment.” But what does a “child friendly environment” look like to a Millennial parent? It can be broken down into three main components: communication, environment, and personality.

Communication: When Millennial parents describe good communication, they specifically desire all providers, nurses, and staff to respect them and their children. This includes encouraging their children—not just using the appropriate learning level but also coupled with behaviors such as speaking at the child’s actual eye-level.

Environment: Millennial parents are looking for elements in the environment such as toys, books, games, movies, healthy snacks, colorful walls, and child-size furniture in waiting rooms as well as the clinic or hospital rooms. They want a calming, child-safe area with distractions for all of their children—not only the child who is the patient.

Personality: The personalities of the healthcare providers, nurses, and staff are of the utmost importance. This goes beyond good communication skills to include the inherent personality traits of providers and staff. Millennial parents are looking for funny, friendly, kind, smiling faces in the clinic or hospital. They want someone caring for their child who is empathetic, approachable, trustworthy, and compassionate. Millennial parents want a trusted friend relationship with their provider. They crave an authentic and personalized experience as customers, and as patients. This is expected by Millennials not only within the healthcare setting but also with any brand they interact with or consume.

Building provider relationships with Millennial parents

Taking a closer look at Millennial parents’ thoughts on healthcare providers and nurses, similar themes arise when asked to describe who is “good with children” this is evident when describing a “child friendly environment;” communication, reputation, friend-like, and personality.

Respect from the provider or nurse is a key communication component—not talking down to the parent or patient and ensuring the diagnosis or child’s progress is explained in a way that the entire family can understand. They also expect the provider to use a calming voice and caring touch to help educate the child and family about their care and make them feel important. Millennial parents are looking for active listening—someone who is conscious of their non-verbal cues such as having an open posture and not making the child or parent feel rushed.

Millennial parents desire a rapport and building a friendship between the providers and their entire family. They would like their child to feel part of the care team—even if it is in a small way—not only to help the parents feel heard, but also to demonstrate the provider’s concern and care for their child. Millennial parents describe their role as a mentor to their children. This interactive relationship is highly collaborative which goes beyond that expected by previous generations. They want the child to be engaged and empowered by the healthcare providers and nurses through recognition and praise.

In the opinion of Millennial parents, a provider with a good reputation is someone who is seen as being good with children. They specifically seek comments and reviews that praise providers for

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how they treat children and families.

The same desired qualities of personality surfaced with a couple unique descriptors. These include someone who is jovial, charismatic, knowledgeable, personable, enthusiastic, and sympathetic. Millennial parents are not simply looking for someone to resolve a condition or keep their child well. They are looking at the quality of the provider-child interaction and desiring a provider who will engage in simple play or tell friendly jokes to put their child at ease.

What can pediatric care do differently?

There are many ways to involve Millennial parents in co-creating with a hospital or clinic. For example, parents could be given the opportunity to share with each other via a blog or in an onsite group education session. Inclusion can also be facilitated by having Millennial parents serve on patient and family advisory councils. They should be—and really want to be—part of everything. They want to understand the organizational mission as a thriving entity in addition to the purpose and calling of those caring for their children.

Including Millennial parents involves giving them a voice to drive real change which, in turn, provides a competitive edge. This engagement keeps Millennials loyal to the organization as well as aids in collecting more valuable feedback. Organizations must go beyond explaining how patient experience feedback is collected, to showing and demonstrating through actions why it is important for driving better care and outcomes for their children. This increases the likelihood of Millennials creating favorable organizational word-of-mouth in the community by being more apt to share their experiences with others.

A second opportunity for change is making respite rooms available to parents and families. Respite rooms allow a quiet, private space to discuss the child's diagnosis with the care team while processing and understanding complex and emotionally difficult information. It provides the environment to comprehend what is wrong and discuss the child's needed plan for care. Providing a respite room is the number one item Millennial parents think pediatric care providers should do differently.

Patient rooms should allow parents to rest and be close to their child. The ability to stay overnight and having an unrestricted visitation hours policy helps meet the needs for family involvement that these parents crave. Amenities such as on-hand health snacks minimize errand-running and the option to bring pets to cheer up their child are family-centered options they hope for as well.⁹

Having the latest technology and employing experienced staff and healthcare providers are baseline expectations of Millennial parents. In addition to being included in the care process and having time and space to be with their child, the care needs to be all-encompassing. For example, Millennial parents want patient and family navigators to guide them through their child's healthcare encounter, making the medical journey easy and simple to understand. Use of child and family counselors can help ease anxiety during a highly stressful experience. Millennials want clinicians who see and understand their whole picture, remembering to care for their entire family, all the time.

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9 NRC Health Market Insights Data (October/November 2016)

Your future: Millennial loyalty

Millennials are highly mobile for seeking treatment and will travel great distances to seek healthcare services. Once their favor is earned, this generation is more loyal than any other. Why does their loyalty matter? According to the US Census Bureau, the lifetime value of a patient at \$1.4 million so their loyalty is key to the growth and profitability of any healthcare organization.

How do you earn the loyalty of Millennial parents? It's done by proving value, inclusion in discussion processes where they share thoughts and ideas, and being included as a real agent for change within the organization.

Loyalty can be driven with this generation by having positive encounters with a provider who has built rapport with their child and the family. A positive experience starts upstream from the interaction with the caregiver at the clinic or the hospital. It begins before the actual care experience with ease of access to the organization. Is it easy to get an appointment, either online or by a phone call? Are the hours of availability convenient for the parent?

Access is more than the ability to set an appointment. Millennials are also looking for easy online access to the medical records. Then, insurance acceptance and price are next on their radar—especially if out-of-pocket expenses are anticipated. And last, they want access to holistic care and knowledge of all treatment options available for their child.

If part of the encounter fails to meet their expectations, energy needs to be placed on building provider-family relationships, to elevate their experience. Millennials will still be loyal to a provider even if they have a negative experience with another staff member.

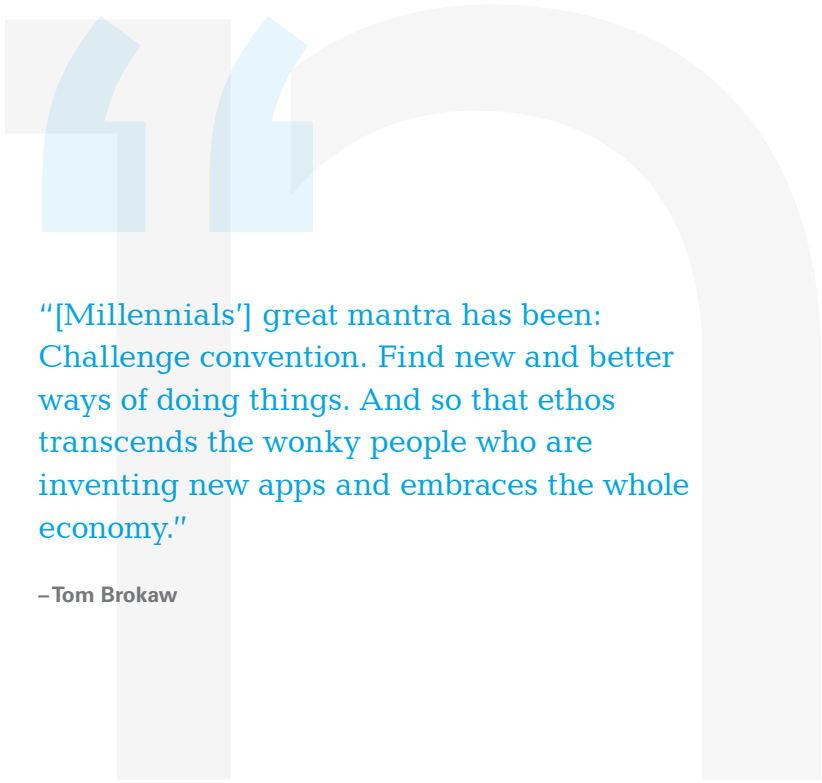
As the surpassing largest generational cohort, the desires of Millennial parents and access to readily available information will alter healthcare. Millennials are forcing healthcare as an industry at all levels to change the way they market, advertise, and hold themselves accountable with transparency. Millennial parents want to collaborate to help change the way a children's hospital provides a patient and family experience by creating a more unique and personalized experience for every patient and family. Each child has a unique personality and set of needs where the Millennial wants an individualized relational experience. Millennials are optimistic when it comes to change. If we can make the changes they are asking for, creating a more personalized healthcare experience, is this really so bad?

WHAT DOES MILLENNIAL LOYALTY LOOK LIKE TODAY?

- 39% of Millennials without kids lack a primary care provider
- 88% of Millennial parents have a pediatrician
- 65% of Millennial parents have had the same pediatrician for over a year

(NRC Health Market Insights Data, October/November 2016)

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"[Millennials'] great mantra has been: Challenge convention. Find new and better ways of doing things. And so that ethos transcends the wonky people who are inventing new apps and embraces the whole economy."

–Tom Brokaw

**NRC Health helps healthcare organizations
better understand the people they care for and
design experiences that inspire loyalty.**