

# Millennials: What can the Healthcare system learn from Millennials?

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January 27, 2016 Dan Piekarz EHR, Guest Post, Patient Engagement

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While the aging boomer generation will bring healthcare costs to new highs, it is the Millennial generation that will likely show us new ways to deal with those increasing costs, through their unique relationship with technology. The Millennials have now come into their own, and according to the Census Bureau, the Millennials are over 75 million strong in 2015 and will eclipse the boomers to [become the largest generation of Americans](#). Industries that want to remain relevant need to understand this generation as they are a primary economic force expected to be [spending \\$200 billion annually in the next two years](#).

Some may ask, “What does this have to do with healthcare, aren’t we talking about kids?” Well, the Millennials are currently ages 15-35. The oldest are now getting married and having children – and their unique traits will define what successful patient engagement looks like in the future. So what is it about the millennials that make them different? A recent White House [report](#) noted that millennials are the most technically savvy, ethnically diverse, highly educated and socially connected generation the USA has ever seen.

Unfortunately the millennials high degree of college education is a double edged sword. While lifetime earnings for college graduates is much higher than non-graduates, the high cost of college combined with the ‘great recession’ has led to one of the poorest generations for the US and created one of the toughest consumer groups ever. Money is a very limited resource for Millennials and they expect the highest value possible for their money. According to a [PNC study](#) Millennials expect their healthcare to be delivered quickly. This ‘drive through’ generation prefer retail clinics and acute care clinics when

possible, with only 61% of Millennials noting they actually visited a primary care physician. When choosing healthcare they follow the same ritual as when purchasing any important product or service. They check online reviews, tweets and ask their friends when shopping for the right healthcare provider, and one out of five surveyed by PNC listed unexpected/surprise bills (such as those associated with surprise healthcare costs) as a major issue.

According to world-renowned game designer Jane McGonigal, a 21-year-old spent the same amount of time between 5th to 12th grade learning as they did gaming. This generation has been molded by the immersive technology of video games and they expect a similar immersive experience when dealing with service providers. If we want Millennial patients who are more engaged in their healthcare we need to look at examples from industries that have been able to effectively grab the attention of the Millennial generation.

This focus on gamification and immersive experience was behind the creation of a concept application called KidPro demonstrated at the recent DIA convention. KidPro is a fully gamified electronic patient recorded outcomes system built for children ages six to ten. Since ePRO systems and electronic Patient Diaries are not usable by children, attendees had incredibly positive feedback on KidPro, which has the potential to help the Millennials raise children who see healthcare as fun and engaging. The Millennial generation is still young enough where more immersive healthcare engagement focused on education and prevention can greatly reduce healthcare spending per capita as that generation ages with healthier habits.

Guy “Kry0” Costantini, Director of Community at mobile game powerhouse, Kabam (publisher of Marvel: Contest of Champions) and veteran of PC gaming giant Riot Games has had a unique career spanning both the video game and healthcare technology industries. Guy’s expertise is in helping companies identify ways to keep customers thinking about products through social connections both in and out of game. During a recent conversation with Guy he said, “Not tapping into peoples’ social connections leaves a lot of value on the table. Every person can be a powerful advocate or detractor of your products and of your decisions. You have to be part of the conversation people are already having about you in their social circles, you have to speak to them colloquially, in a way they are used to conversing among each other. You need compelling content, designed to entertain, engage and create shareable moments. When you leverage the

connections and channels that people are already on, they will force multiply your message and you create loyalty”. This approach is the path to full customer engagement in all B2C industries including healthcare.

Social media is also changing the way all patients interact with healthcare providers. Healthcare companies will need to leverage a range of applications to keep Millennial patients engaged, such as new apps currently in development that help healthcare and life sciences analytics experts understand how their company and products are trending in social media while looking at publically available competitive information. Companies can then better understand and compare the dependencies between educational, marketing and sales efforts with the trends on social media, which makes managing their eReputation much easier. When a consumer mentions a company or product on the web, it’s in that company’s best interest to know about it and respond. Social media has become a communication hub where we get our news, talk to our friends and look to engage with the companies we care about. And social media is poised to have a larger impact on many industries, such as pharmaceuticals. It’s only a matter of time before the FDA requires pharma companies to monitor social media for reports of adverse events or effects to their drugs. Many pharma companies are currently not monitoring social media and ignoring this inevitable change.

The Millennial generation expects healthcare providers and other companies to engage with them and to know who they are via technology and face-to-face interaction. In an age where I can go to any Jiffy Lube in the USA and they will be able to bring up all the specifications for my car and any service I had previously, the idea that this type of nationwide system is unavailable for healthcare is absurd. Millennials expect technology to work, be simple, connected, mobile and extensive in its feature set, a complete system. The ideal patient engagement system would follow this prescription: A mobile platform that provides patients with the ability to manage their medical records, prescriptions and doctor visits, make payments, message their doctor, and of course have virtual doctor visits. This is not a mere wish list – it is what the Millennials have come to expect from any modern service provider, a fully immersive engagement model. The patient portals available today look like websites from the late 90s in comparison to what is expected. The portal used by my primary care physician is less than impressive, and provides me with very little functionality. It is sad that my local coffee shop has a more feature rich mobile app than my healthcare network.

Immersive engagement, good service, fair prices and cost transparency are expected from the Millennials, and healthcare providers do not want to be on the bad side of this generation. Millennials are a social juggernaut with technological powers like the world has never seen. Within seconds of bad services, they will immortalize it across social media. Millennials have thousands of friends, followers and connections in their electronic network ready to shred the reputation of any organization that does not treat them well, or make engagement simple. All age groups seem to be aware that medical care is too expensive and unpredictable, but as the Millennials start to use healthcare more and more, their force and focus on technology, especially mobile platforms, will make these kinds of changes to our healthcare system inevitable.

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