

Trending Now: What's Up with the Millennial Physicians?*

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Background: Millennials are the demographic cohort born from 1982- 2004. They exhibit optimism, multitasking, techno-savvy, but with constant need for structure. Medical trainees are no exception. As local studies on this concern have been trending, available data are lacking.

Objective: This cross-sectional study describes the characteristics of millennial physicians as to attitudes towards their profession, approach to authority and rules, learning preferences, and healthcare practice.

Methodology: Focused group interviews and quantitative survey were conducted among 150 physicians, aged 25-34 years, at the University of Santo Tomas Hospital in Manila.

Results: Most respondents perceive medical profession as a noble way of contributing to society. However, they rarely consider it as a full-time vocation. Rather, they intend to pursue part-time entrepreneurial endeavors for economic reasons, or otherwise. Respect for authority based on values over professional accomplishments is a prominent finding. They prefer approachable and friendly mentors. They only comply with rules that they agree on, unless it is morally unacceptable. Furthermore, the millennial participants learn most effectively in a quiet environment, by listening and taking notes than reading and discussing with others. They attend medical lectures most of the time but when they don't, no remorse is associated. They learn most efficiently through repetition and demonstration. Practical skills are favored more than theoretical knowledge. All use medical apps for healthcare practice. Majority chooses digital over printed materials in seeking treatment information. However, in patient education, they do not prefer the use of text messages or social networking sites. They put more value in face-to-face teachings to families than sharing links for online health materials.

Conclusion: The qualities and preferences of millennial physicians provide insights and challenges for the medical faculty to better engage the future healthcare providers. Actions to address the emerging generational gaps are recommended to meet the demands of young physicians of today.

Key words: Millennial physicians, millennials, young physicians, medical trainees

INTRODUCTION

Millennials, also known as Generation Y or the Net Generation, directly follow Generation X. The term was

coined by authors Willam Strauss and Neil Howe¹ to describe the demographic cohort born from 1982-2004. In their book *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (2000), they characterize millennials as optimistic, multi-taskers, trend-setters, technologically inclined, influential, social beings.

As the most ethnically diverse generation, millennials tend to be tolerant of difference. Having been raised under

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the mantra “follow your dreams” and being told they were special, they tend to be confident. While largely a positive trait, this generation’s confidence has been argued to spill over into the realms of entitlement and narcissism. Among other weaknesses include their lack of structure with constant need for supervision. Do these characteristics hold true among millennials under medical training? Local studies on this concern have been trending. However, available data on characteristics of millennial physicians are lacking.

Millennials are classified as a civic or hero generation, which means that during the generation’s lifetime there is an increasing civic engagement throughout the society. Authors Morley Winograd and Mike Hais² wrote in their book, *Millennial Makeover* (2014), that civic realignments are characterized by: “identification with specific political parties and straight-ticket voting; rising voter turnout and/or maintenance of turnout at high levels; positive attitudes toward politics and political institutions; focus on broader societal and economic issues; greater ability of the political process to deal with major concerns and institution building; and greater economic equality and relatively small income and wealth disparities.”

Winograd and Hais² classify civic generations as dominant and outer-fixated. This means that millennials as civic generations are very dominant and focus on larger societal needs rather than individual needs. They added that millennials are “reared in a highly protective manner so that an orientation to societal challenges, problem-solving and institution building marks their adult lives.” Millennials have grown up much more protected and sheltered than previous generations, particularly those of Generation X.

Indeed, in a 2007 Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) study called “Millennials Talk Politics,” one young millennial had this to say about civic engagement: “I think that civic engagement is very important whether you help others or to make a statement about society or help a culture, group or organization.³ That engagement brings with it an awareness of issues in society that makes them all better citizens.”

Millennials have a much higher attraction to public service related jobs than older generations. According to the Universum Ideal Employer Survey, students would most like to work for, “Government/Public Service.” Nearly three-quarters cited the “opportunity to make a difference” and the “ability to help people” as reasons for this preference. Studies have also shown that millennials are more attracted to products that give back, such as those that donate a portion of their proceeds to charity.

In the workplace, some adaptations have come about from employers accommodating millennials. The bring-your-own device (BYOD) trend, for example, is at least in part a reaction to the millennials’ near-addiction to mobile devices. Workplace satisfaction matters more than monetary compensation to millennials. Work-life balance is often considered essential. They are less likely than previous generations to put up with an unpleasant work environment and much more likely to use social networking to ventilate their concerns. On the other hand, satisfied millennials are often employee advocates for their organizations providing honest, free and convincing public relations.

The Millennial generation’s attraction to teamwork is a big factor in strengthening their civil and political engagement. The 2007 CIRCLE survey found that millennials feel that organizing people is the key to social change, beating out volunteering, voting, advocating for policy change and giving money.

Growing up bombarded by advertising, millennials tend to be skeptical about promotional material of any kind. Whether buying products and services or considering employment, they are more likely to listen to their friends than to be affected by marketing or public relations materials. This characteristic makes both conventional marketing and employee recruitment practices often ineffective for millennials.

Millennials do everything tech-related in higher percentages than all other generations. They are the most likely to use the internet and send or receive an email at least occasionally (90 percent reportedly do),

although Gen X and Boomers aren't far behind (at 87 and 79 percent, respectively). Millennials are not only most likely to have created a profile on a social networking site, but are also most likely to visit their profile page "several times a day" (29 percent say they do, compared to 19 percent of Gen Xer's and 11 percent of Boomers). Furthermore, they are the only generation with a majority reporting that they visit their profile page "several times a day" as opposed to "once a day", "every few days", or "once a week or less." They also have more positive attitudes about technology than other generations. They are the most likely to say that technology makes life easy rather than harder, brings people closer together than drives them further apart, and allows people to use their time more efficiently.

Furthermore, millennials are doing their part to advance technology as well. The creator of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg, is a millennial. Not only is Facebook the number one social networking site used around the world, it is now used by anyone and everything. Businesses, politicians, radio stations, news stations, movies, bands, anything and anyone can have a Facebook page and most (if they are smart) already do. It has even played a big role in changing politics. The co-founder of Facebook.com, Chris Hughes, has recently launched jumo.com, a social network that connects individuals who want to "change the world" with non-profit organizations so that they can find more ways to get involved in the issues that matter to them. This is a great example of how millennials are utilizing technology to improve the world.

Over-all, these facts give a general overview of the millennial generation. However, specific objective data on characteristics of millennial physicians in the local setting are lacking. Thus, a study on this field is highly relevant and recommended.

This cross-sectional study aimed to describe the characteristics of selected Filipino millennial physicians as to 1) attitudes toward their profession, 2) approach to authority and rules, 3) learning preferences, and 4) healthcare practices.

METHODS

Study Design

This is a descriptive, cross-sectional study on the characteristics of selected Filipino millennial physicians under training.

Population

A total of 150 randomly selected millennial post-graduate interns, residents and fellows of University of Santo Tomas Hospital in Manila who gave written informed consent prior to participation were included in this study, conducted from January to March 2016.

Setting

This study was conducted in the respective working rooms of the millennial respondents in UST Hospital.

Inclusion, Exclusion and Withdrawal Criteria

Inclusion criteria included: age, between 25-34 years; a degree in Medicine and currently training as a post-graduate intern, resident or fellow. All randomly selected respondents who gave their informed consent were invited to take part in this study.

Millennial physicians who refused to give consent were excluded. Moreover, respondents who decided to withdraw from this study were allowed to do so, without any question/s.

Data Collection

Focused group interviews were conducted among the millennial trainees. A quantitative survey was also employed to explore the respondents' demographic features, attitudes towards their profession and healthcare-related practices. The responses were then gathered, tallied when necessary, encoded and subsequently subjected to statistical analysis.

The data gathered were entered in Microsoft Excel sheets and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 15 for Windows. Statistics were presented as mean \pm standard deviation, range, and frequency (% values).

Ethical Considerations

This study agreed with the ethical principles set out in the Declaration of Helsinki 2013, WHO Operational Guidelines, ICH-GCP, National Ethical Guidelines 2011 Edition. No conflict of interest as well as financial, familial, or proprietary conflict was involved in this study.

This descriptive, quantitative study did not involve study subjects from the vulnerable population including children, elderly, ethnic/racial minority groups, homeless, prisoners, mentally retarded, those with incurable disease, those politically powerless, junior members of a hierarchical groups and students.

In summary, figure 1 shows a diagrammatic representation of the study's methods and procedures.

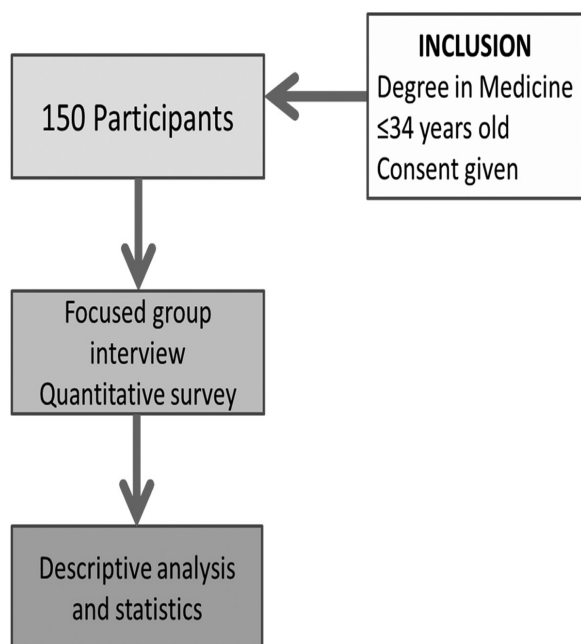


Figure 1. Methodology of the study

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 150 in-service training millennial physicians were included in this study. Table 1 shows the subject's demographics. There's almost an equal number of male and female respondents. More than half (55.33%) were 26-29 years old. Meanwhile, 61.33% of the study subjects were in the university hospital's post-graduate internship training program.

Table 1. Demographic profile of the millennial subjects (n=150).

| | Total (n=150) |
|--------------------------|---------------|
| Gender | |
| Male | 73 |
| Female | 77 |
| Age | |
| <26 | 42 |
| 26-29 | 83 |
| 30-34 | 25 |
| Training | |
| Post-graduate Internship | 92 |
| Residency | 51 |
| Fellowship | 7 |

The millennials' Attitude Towards Their Profession

The millennial physicians' attitude towards the medical profession was explored. Figure 2 shows that most of them perceived their vocation as a noble way of contributing to the society.

These findings were compatible with a general millennial survey conducted by R. Scott in 2015 noting that millennials rule at giving back to the society. They are social beings, wanting to help the community. They are geared towards making a positive impact on the world.

A small proportion (13%) however considered their profession as a business, a source of stable income and a way to gain social and moral authority in the society.

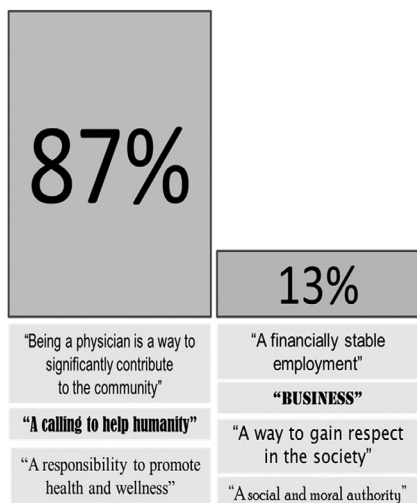


Figure 2. Attitude towards medical profession (n=150)

The respondents were also asked if they consider the practice of medicine as a full-time vocation. Figure 3 shows that majority of the respondents intended to pursue other careers aside from their profession. 82% were interested in doing things other than the practice of medicine such entrepreneurial endeavors for economic reasons. Others wanted to devote more time with their family, taking care of their young children while other millennial physicians wanted to pursue literature and the arts.

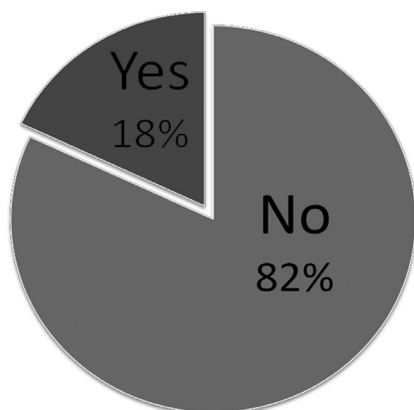


Figure 3. Perception towards medical practice as a full-time vocation (n=150)

According to Shapira in his article published in The Washington Post in 2008, millennials preferred flexibility and freedom in their profession. They wanted a multidimensional growth. Thus, medical trainees are no exception.

Approach to Authority and Rules

Respect for authority based on good values over professional accomplishments and title was a prominent finding. They preferred approachable and friendly mentors as shown in figure 4. Only 20% of the millennial physicians surveyed favored serious mentors. The least preferred were mentors who set high expectations on the trainees.

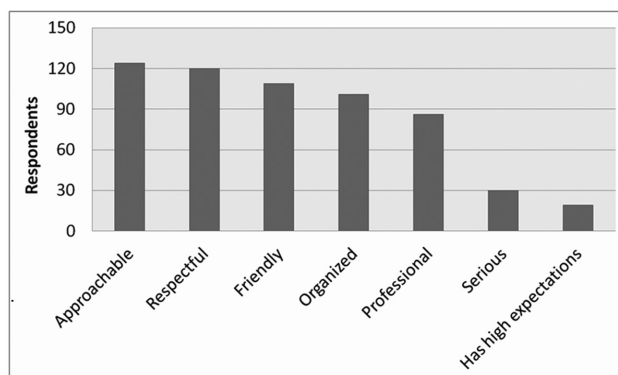


Figure 4. Preferred characteristics of mentors (n=150)

Their approach to rules was also explored. According to them, most (96.67%) would only comply with rules that they agree on, unless it is morally unacceptable. Only a few (3.33%) would not comply with the rules set by their trainers if there is no consequence for doing so.

Learning Preferences

Furthermore, the selected millennial respondents learn most effectively by listening and taking notes than reading and discussing with others as shown in Figure 5.

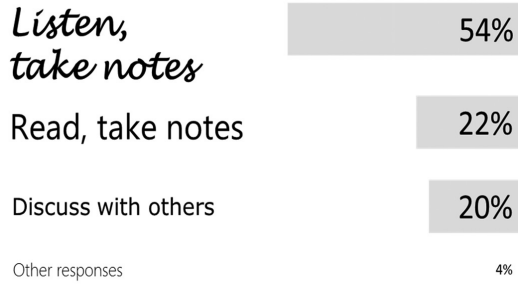


Figure 5. Preferred effective learning method (n=150)

In a 2006 study comparing millennial and Generation X, students in a medical school in France, they concluded that millennials, disturbingly, are not reading literature as much as previous generations of the same age. They preferred to listen or watch. These findings were consistent with the results of this current study.

Only 20% find discussion with others as their most effective means for learning (Figure 5). This is contrary to a study by Sweeney (2015) on reinventing library services for the millennial generation. He noted that most millennials (74.6%) preferred peer-to-peer collaborative group discussions in learning.

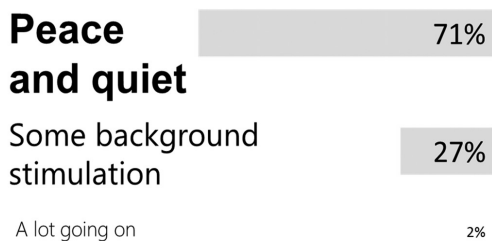


Figure 6. Preferred effective learning environment (n=150)

Results of this study also showed that most millennial physicians wanted a quiet learning environment. This is different from the popular belief that most students prefer to go out and study in coffee shops or 24/7 fast food chains where there is some background stimulation or with a lot of things going on.

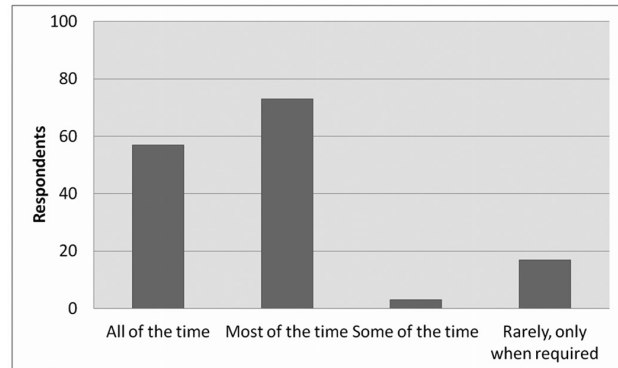


Figure 7. Attendance to CME activities (n=150)

The respondents' attendance to medical lectures and continuing medical education (CME) activities were also explored (Figure 7). They attend most of the time (56.67%) but when they don't, no remorse is made whatsoever.

Moreover, results showed that millennial doctors in training learn most efficiently through repetition and demonstration (Figure 8). Practical skills are favored over theoretical knowledge (Figure 9).

Results of this research is similar to Tapscott's conclusions in 2009 where millennials strongly prefer learning by doing. In his publication, he noted that they almost never read the directions. They favor trial-and-error learning. They prefer skills rather than theories. These characteristics are similar to the millennial physicians included in this local study.

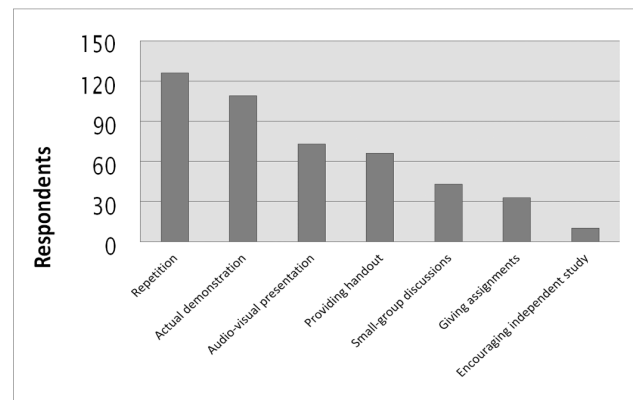


Figure 8. Preferred efficient learning techniques (n=150)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This cross-sectional study described the characteristics of millennial physicians in the local setting. Most respondents perceived the medical profession as a way to contribute to the society. They prefer to respect authority based on values over professional accomplishments, favoring approachable and friendly mentors. They learn most efficiently through practical demonstration of skills and repetition. Majority choose digital over printed materials in seeking treatment information but put more value in face-to-face communication during patient care and health education.

The qualities and preferences of millennial physicians provide insights and challenges for the medical faculty to better engage the future healthcare providers. A wide array of new learning opportunities can be employed for millennial trainees, if trainers are willing to take some risks and innovate. Thus, actions to address the emerging generational gaps are recommended to meet the demands of the young physicians of today.

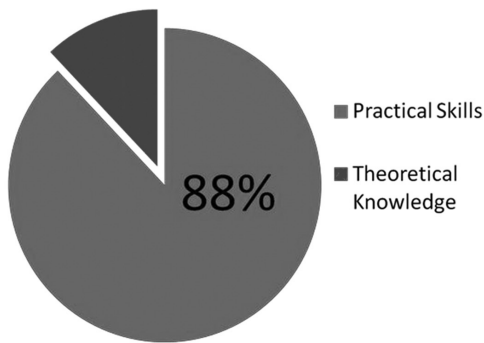


Figure 9. Preferred type of learning (n=150)

Healthcare Practices

Lastly, all (100%) of the surveyed respondents use medical apps in healthcare practice. They utilize the digital references for seeking treatment information, continuing education and further healthcare management. Moreover, almost one-third choose digital over printed materials in seeking treatment information as shown in Figure 10.

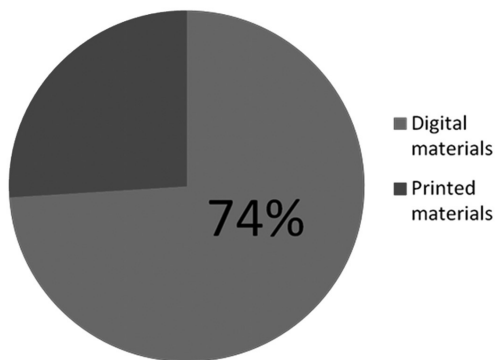


Figure 10. Preferred medical reference (n=150)

However, in terms of patient education, 88% do not prefer the use of text messages or social networking sites. Upon further questioning, they shared that they put more value in face-to-face teachings to families than sharing links for online health materials.

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