



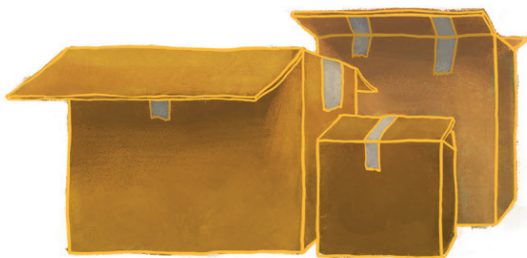
Kids these days: 5 ways millennials are changing healthcare

By Gale Pryor and Ana Yu | November 23, 2016

As the largest generation in U.S. history, millennials have reshaped consumerism. But what happens when the people who catch rides with Uber and couch-surf with Airbnb need a doctor?

Surveys indicate – no surprise – that millennials would like healthcare to catch up with their tech-savvy, cost-conscious, convenience-first ways. athenaInsight sent an intern of a certain age out to interview her peers about their healthcare wants and needs. Here’s a roundup of their opinions and behaviors, as well as results from recent surveys, for a heads-up on a disruption that is just getting started.

1. Does convenience count?



Americans between 21 and 32 rank convenience as their top healthcare priority, surveys show. In a

2015 survey of 5,000 consumers by PNC Healthcare, 34 percent of millennials will visit retail clinics for in-and-out medical treatment, twice the rate of boomers.

Millennials’ tendency to uproot for school and work may also be driving the retail surge. Though millennials make up 25 percent of the total U.S. population, they account for 43 percent of all Americans who relocate each year, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

“I moved recently, and none of the doctors in our area are taking new patients,” says one 2015 college graduate, “so getting care would be difficult without places like MinuteClinic.”

2. Does loyalty matter? TBH, no

Like retail care, concierge medicine is growing thanks to millennials’ preference for instant, easy service.

“I don’t need one doctor to manage everything for me,” says a 25-year-old man working at a startup in San Francisco. “I just need to be seen when I need to be seen.”

A bout of gastroenteritis took him to One Medical Group, a national chain of affordable, concierge primary care clinics. An appointment within 24 hours, a referral for the following week, and a glass of cucumber water in the reception area sealed his loyalty to the company, but not to an individual physician.

Until a stomach bug hits, millennials' health just isn't on their minds much – and building relationships with primary care doctors isn't a priority. According to the PNC survey, only 61 percent of millennials visit primary care physicians, compared to 80 percent of boomers.

And in a survey of 1,700 Americans by Salesforce, 40 percent of millennial respondents did not believe their primary care provider would recognize them if they passed each other on the street.

3. Online portals and mobile apps? Maybe



Given that they had eyes on screens and fingers on keyboards before they could walk, what happens when millennials travel back in time to the fax-machine world of healthcare?

The Salesforce survey reports that 74 percent of millennials would like to book appointments and pay their medical bills online. Nearly as many, 71 percent, say they would use mobile apps to manage their health and medical records. Sixty-three percent would be willing wear devices that communicate health-related data directly to their doctors, and 57 percent say they would even swallow pills that monitor their internal vitals.

Yet that stated enthusiasm for digital connections doesn't match reality. According to data from the athenahealth network, just 32 percent of 20-to-29-year-olds even register for online access to appointments and test results via their doctors' patient portals. And only 27 percent, according to a 2014 survey by Communispace, actually use fitness devices or apps that track their activity.

It may be that young adults are more concerned about privacy, when it comes to their health, than they are in the rest of their open-Facebook lives. "I'd prefer stuff like that not be available to hackers or peeping eyes," says a 21-year-old summer intern.

Or they may not encounter the same quality of user-friendly interfaces in healthcare that they have come to expect from other industries. A survey by Xerox uncovers a generational divide in what patients want from online portals. Boomer respondents want straightforward portals that allow them to schedule appointments, see test results, and email their doctors. Millennial respondents, however, want interactive portals with a host of personalized recommendations and customized services.

4. Find healthcare online? Totes

When they do need a doctor, millennials check Yelp, Healthgrades and other online review sites to find one. A 3,000-person survey from Nuance Communications found that 54 percent of respondents ages 18 to 24 check online physician ratings before seeing a new doctor.

Their penchant for relying on each other's advice fuels the growth of health information sites and patient networks. Half of millennials look up symptoms and treatment options online, according to the Communispace survey, with 28 percent self-diagnosing before making an appointment. In a 2012 survey from the PwC Health Research Institute, 90 percent of respondents ages 18 to 24 say they trust medical information shared by others online.

5. The cost of care? Can't even



Rising deductibles are striking debt-ridden millennials hard – and driving many of them to retail clinics like Carewell Urgent Care, where upfront price lists make it easier to predict the financial hit of a flu shot. Other young adults are skipping care altogether, according to the PNC survey: 54 percent of millennials skip or delay treatment due to cost, compared to 37 percent of boomers.

And with more out-of-pocket costs, millennials are also demanding price transparency in healthcare. According to the PNC survey, 41 percent of millennials are willing to ask for estimates before agreeing to treatment, versus 21 percent of boomers.

Previous generations largely accepted the healthcare system as it was. But millennials – with new costs to contend with and new technology at their fingertips – will likely have other options. Just as they've helped to disrupt the transportation and hotel industries, they'll be demanding change in the patient experience.

Will healthcare be ready?

Gale Pryor is a senior writer for athenaInsight. Ana Yu is an intern for athenaInsight and a senior at Cornell University.

Illustrations by Tiffany Chan and Leela Wagner.



A daily news hub reporting from the heart of the health care internet, with access to a comprehensive data set of health care transactions from athenahealth's nationwide network. We equip leaders with actionable insight and inspiration for making health care work as it should.

Stay in the know

Sign up for weekly data and news:
insight.athenahealth.com/newsletter