

MILLENNIAL EYE CARE



I recently attended the first ME Live meeting in my hometown of Austin, Texas. For those unfamiliar, *MillennialEYE* is essentially a digital journal in the form of an app. Its useful and timely content is aimed at young eye surgeons. If you have not used the app, I encourage you to do so, and if you cannot figure out how to view *ME*, I

recommend asking the nearest teenager. Although few Millennials are currently eye surgeons, they will become a major group in our profession during the coming decade.

I congratulate the organizers of ME Live. The meeting was unusual as well as outstanding. No print materials were available. To access the daily agenda, attendees consulted the ME app. I admit that I felt some pleasure when, briefly, no one could pull up the app to see who the first speaker was. Audience responses occurred via Tweets or text messages. Having a room full of people glued to their phones during my talk was, for once, a positive experience. That said, speakers such as myself were slightly unnerved to see real-time feedback on our presentations appear on large video monitors.

Health care will change, as Millennials become patients as well as providers. Baby boomers represent the previous big population explosion in the United States, but Millennials outnumber baby boomers by more than 11 million. The most common age in this country is currently 22, and by 2020, one in three adults will be a Millennial.¹ Much has been written about marketing to Millennials and how they do not respond to traditional media outreach efforts. Generation Y also has different

ideas of luxury. For example, whereas not a few baby boomers would find the techno-nightclub atmosphere of the W Hotel extremely annoying, Millennials might be bored stiff at the Ritz Carlton. Such differences present a quandary for ophthalmic practices attempting to appeal to both demographics.

Millennials entered the workforce during one of the most significant economic downturns in recent history, and as a result, many of them are underemployed. Although pundits have suggested that Millennials will rescue lagging LASIK

volumes, most of them will not be able to afford the procedure for quite some time. While refractive surgeons wait, a valid question is whether or not this generation obsessed with handheld devices will value myopia more than their predecessors and skip LASIK in larger numbers.

Another question: is it too soon to begin preparing for the cohort of people following Generation Y? At present, there is no consensus on what to call these folks, but leading contenders are Generation Z, Posts, and Homelanders. Does the last of these refer to kids conceived while their parents watched "Homeland" on Showtime? I am not going to worry about it. I will let some Millennial eye surgeon figure it out. ■

“Health care will change, as Millennials become patients as well as providers.”

Steven J. Dell, MD
Chief Medical Editor

1. Raphelson S. Amid the stereotypes, some facts about Millennials. NPR website. <http://n.pr/1w0nWjg>. November 18, 2014. Accessed January 6, 2015.