

IS THE KEY TO IMPROVING HEALTHCARE AT OUR THUMBS? A NEW STUDY SUGGESTS OUR PHONES MAY BE THE BAROMETER OF IMPROVEMENTS IN HEALTHCARE

It's not news that doctors and patients alike are challenged by the complexity of giving and receiving care. Worldwide, our health systems are over-burdened, and cost restrained, and physicians are hampered by bureaucracy. But, a new study "Will Millennial Doctors Change Healthcare?" from Zeno Goup, an integrated marketing consultancy, shows that physicians who are millennials themselves aspire to get closer to patients, not only to improve care but to enhance their own career satisfaction. And, it's not surprising that they see digital engagement as a path toward achieving that goal.

More than three-quarters (79 percent) of the millennial physicians interviewed said they are eager to lead the charge in healing healthcare. The survey, conducted in the US and the UK to reflect the experiences of physicians in different payor systems, showed broad support among young physicians for using digital technology to improve the connection with and day-to-day care of patients. Eighty-one percent of millennial doctors said digital communications between physicians and patients can impact the practice of medicine and a majority believe that direct mobile engagement is beginning to have some impact on the doctor-patient engagement with patients. However, too few doctors are empowered to use digital technologies to better connect with patients.

Of greatest concern is the loss of a personal relationship with patients. 89 percent of millennial physicians agree that it's difficult to spend enough time with patients to develop those personal relationships that lead to a more intuitive diagnoses, versus 79 percent of older doctors. Close to half (47 percent) of millennial respondents say the doctor-patient relationship is getting somewhat worse or much worse.

These doctors insist that it's an imperative to have the flexibility to care for and connect with patients in their own way because that connection with patients is what drives their career satisfaction. At a time when there is ample news coverage about physician burnout, we must do all we can to ensure doctors have the ability to find joy and gratification in their work because what's at risk is the decline of interest in being a physician. The Zeno study showed that more than half of millennial physicians surveyed worry that being a doctor will become

increasingly *less* rewarding over the next two decades due to the need to spend more time on paperwork than with patients. This prediction is already a reality with reports showing already notable GP Shortages in the UK and the US predicted to be at risk for a shortage of up to 120,000 physicians by 2030. With 60% of physicians noting that their ability to form a connection is the most important way a doctor can provide care, enabling that connection becomes critical.

While physicians recognize the value of peer-to-peer and doctor-to-patient engagement through the same digital technologies with which they connect in their personal lives, only 15 percent of the millennial doctors surveyed report seeing a “significant impact” of technology in better patient communications – somewhat less optimistic than older doctors (at 22 percent). This may be because very few health institutions have the mechanisms in place to support these efforts and doctors struggle with how best to engage in a manner that is both fluid and respectful of regulations.

This generation of digital natives thrives on two-sided communications, and that’s where the industry can help. The same industry that educates patients to be more informed and proactive health consumers, can leverage its digital know-how to help physicians deliver concise and impactful information to patients even as they navigate regulatory limitations. Offering physicians the tools -- short videos, educational graphics and channel insights -- is a step toward partnering with these younger physicians on a new model of care.

About the Research



Zeno’s “Will Millennial Doctors Change Healthcare?” study is based on research fielded by Zeno’s primary research team via an online survey instrument to 314 general practitioners and primary care physicians in the US and UK. The interview pool was split approximately 50/50 between physicians aged 26-40 and physicians aged 41+. The overall sample has a +/- 6 percent margin of error, with a 95 percent confidence level.

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