

# HACKS

## MAKE SENSE OF MILLENNIAL PATIENTS



What to know about Millennials to build trust and cultivate loyalty.

WITH NOËLLE SHERBER, MD

### How are Millennials different from younger patients of prior generations?

**Noëlle Sherber, MD:** What sets Millennials apart as a patient population is not their age, but their perspective. Dermatologists have always cared for patients in their teens, twenties, and thirties. The US Census defines Millennials as those born between 1982-2000 which places them at 18-36 years old in 2018. The Millennial generation has defining characteristics, such as being “digital natives,” as the first generation born into a world of social media and technological connectedness. They are also the largest generation in US history, so they are establishing significant power in the economy and are already outspending Baby Boomers in sectors such as self-care.

### What is important to a Millennial patient in a visit to a physician for aesthetic care?

**Dr. Sherber:** Millennials are demonstrating great interest and investment in self-care and wellness services, and they are choosing to spend on experiences over objects. As such, building in defining experiential elements to an aesthetic practice attracts Millennial patients. Our practice offers plush cotton robes and private cabanas (see photo, next page) rather than stiff paper gowns and public waiting rooms, which is popular with patients of all ages but is often captured in selfies by Millennials. While some suggest

that Millennials may not be loyal, retail research is suggesting that they are brand-loyal as long as pricing is fair and their expectations are met.

### How do you connect with Millennial patients and establish a relationship?

**Dr. Sherber:** Millennials are accustomed to informing their decisions through their own internet research. This has important implications not only for a practice’s online presence but also for the in-office patient interaction. In many cases, a Millennial patient may approach a consultation thinking that he or she knows which products or procedures s/he wants prior to your recommendations. Rather than dismissing this, the physician should use this as an opportunity to demonstrate an additional level of expertise and nuance of information that will establish trust and respect. Your evidence-based personalized plan will then stand out from the information available online and will serve to strengthen the physician-patient relationship.

### Do Millennials have to “like” you to like you?

**Dr. Sherber:** An online and social media presence seems to be an essential component of practice building in this digital era, particularly for new practices, but if it isn’t authentic to your voice, younger patients will see through this. Social media offers opportunities to educate on topics related to



your specialty and to provide exclusive opportunities to patients, both of which contribute to the “experience” of your practice and create a feeling of community for your patients, to which Millennials respond very positively.

Authenticity is key to success with online engagement, so outsourcing your social media and populating it with generic content and buying followers will be apparent to a young and savvy demographic, and they will have an aversion to interacting with a virtual version of your office that doesn’t represent the the in-office experience.

### How do you manage the proliferation of skincare products that Millennials are using?

**Dr. Sherber:** Skincare and beauty product subscription boxes are a popular option among my Millennial patients, but the buildup of these products on bathroom counters can lead to unintended consequences. Without fully understanding the ingredients in each of the products, patients may be inadvertently layering acids and retinols, for instance, and can develop irritation from this sort of “cocktailing.”

I advise my patients to bring all current skincare products to the first office visit. I have an ample counter space in my treatment rooms where they can arrange their products before I come in for the consultation, and we then review their daily and nightly regimen together. This information can also be entered digitally on my electronic medical record patient portal, but bringing in the physical products is a good way for me to ensure completeness.

I know more about skincare than patients are able to look up online, so this establishes a level of expertise that is a solid foundation for our beginning to streamline their regimen based on active ingredients and to work together on their skin. Once we have a focused regimen in place, we start talking about the next level of treatments, such as gentle laser treatments that increase absorption of active ingredients to deliver more targeted results.

Depending on their specific aesthetic concerns, Millennials may be candidates for fillers, neuromodula-

tors, or certain energy-based procedures. Clear + Brilliant Perm e is an excellent first step in laser treatment, because treatment is shown to increase absorption of topical active ingredients by a factor of up to 17, which means potentially enhanced efficacy for certain topical formulations.

I talk with patients about Perm e as a way to “reset” their skin with a quick recovery after inconsistent skincare routines since they will be motivated to be on a consistent regimen of aftercare. Because the laser targets signs of photodamage, especially in its early manifestations, it is highly motivating for patients who need to be more mindful of daily sunscreen and better photoprotective habits. Plus, Solta offers a rewards program, similar to reward programs for injectables. These rewards programs “game-ify” treatment, which is very popular with Millennials.

### Are you seeing “prejuvenation” in action with this generation?

**Dr. Sherber:** I find that my Millennial patients have a proactive mindset, and they are very engaged to take full advantage of the safe and effective products and procedures available to help maintain healthy and beautiful skin. Men and women are setting up regularly scheduled visits with me for skin cancer screenings and also for aesthetic procedures, so the mentality of self-care is extending to dermatology and aesthetic medicine.

Since the Millennials are the largest generation in America’s history, understanding what sparks interest and engagement with this singular group will help practices cultivate this patient base and develop long lasting relationships into the decades that follow. ■

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