

Researchers examine millennial generation's learning preferences in medical education

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Credit: Mayo Clinic

The classroom can reflect its students' learning preferences, and a study published today in *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* demonstrates evidence of this in medical education. At Mayo Clinic School of Medicine,

Alexandra Wolanskyj, M.D., senior associate dean for Student Affairs, and Darcy Reed, M.D., senior associate dean for Academic Affairs, collaborated with Janeve Desy, M.D., of the University of Calgary's Cumming School of Medicine to assess the education methods preferred by the generation that makes up the highest population of medical learners.

The study focuses on competency-based medical education, which consists of milestones and entrustable professional activities. Though attempts have been challenged in the past, the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada have successfully introduced competency-based medical education to their respective institutions recently. The study notes that this change in attitude coincided with the increased presence of millennial medical students in the classroom.

Defined as individuals born between 1982 and 2000, the [millennial generation](#) is described by the study as displaying more needs for perfectionism, transparency, rules and emotional stability, and less self-reliance, while setting high expectations. The step-based approach of competency-based medical education is formed on a continuum beginning at the novice level and provides milestones where specific feedback is offered to learners—a component that Dr. Reed says is essential to a millennial's educational progress. "The milestone-based assessment provides a sense of mentorship to students by continuously following them down a spectrum and evaluating their performance," says Dr. Reed. "This assessment allows the individuals providing feedback to be very specific and tailor that feedback to millennial learners in a way that is pertinent to the skill set they'll need in their medical profession."

The study attributes these traits to the global environment in which millennials were raised and their greater exposure to it through the internet. This exposure has influenced a generation that values

technology, teamwork, personalization and mentoring in professional and educational settings. The study suggests that competency-based [medical education](#) satisfies these needs through a personalized education that also considers the emotional quotient and professional readiness of the student.

"Millennials are extremely socially minded and inspired to serve patients," says Dr. Wolanskyj, the study's senior author. "Milestone-based assessment is essential for a number of reasons, chiefly for public accountability of how we're training future physicians, and [it] sets a high bar this generation is determined to attain."

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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