

MOHEG Student Essay Award

US Healthcare: Views from Millennials Around the World

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Millennials Around the World

Millennials (sometimes referred to as Generation Y) are defined as the group of people that have been born from 1982 to the late 1990s. With around half of this generation not being in the work force, this generation has acquired some negative connotations (often being referred to as “Generation Me” and the “Point and Click” generation) that have been given to them by older generations. With some of these negative connotations, the majority of people in older generations believe that Millennials are not tuned into their surroundings and what is going on in the world, thus, many of their opinions are disregarded (White, Geoff, and Kiegaldie, 2011). In a series of interviews of Millennial pairs living in the U.S. from South Africa, Poland, and Brazil, one might be surprised to see an outsiders opinion on the state of our current health care system from countries with public health care programs already in place (Boulhol et al., 2012) (Esteves, 2012) (Akinyemiju, McDonald, and Lantz 2015).

South Africa

Daan Jansen and Suzanne Van Rensburg were both born in South Africa in the early 1990's. Overall, they both agreed that the United States health care system seemed to be better than the South African system, saying the every hospital they have seen in America is significantly cleaner and better than any public, and on par with most private, hospitals in South Africa. However, they tend to think that physicians in South Africa are more educated and perform better than ones here in America. In South Africa, students can receive all of their medical schooling at no cost if they are willing to work in the public health sector for four years following graduation. Daan and Suzanne said that is what most medical students choose to do, and this keeps the medical education systems competitive since people can choose where they want to go for free. Daan bragged about how the first successful heart transplant was in South

Africa, and Suzanne was proud to explain how Canada often head hunts physicians in the area to come and work for them. Another thing they really admire about the South African heath system is its involvement in educating young people on disease. In primary school, like elementary in the U.S., everyone takes a class called “Life Orientation” where they learn about all sorts of common illnesses such as HIV/AIDS and cervical cancer. Daan described it as being almost like sexual education class that a lot of Americans have, only more in depth and it begins when students are about 11 years old. They feel that not enough Americans are educated on disease and this creates a social stigma in the U.S., especially on conditions such as STDs and blood borne pathogens.

Poland

Michal Bulak and Kacper Cwiek were born in the early and mid 1990s in Poland after it became a total democracy. Kacper has not had much interaction with the United States’ health care system other than what he has experienced on campus. He was impressed at how quickly he could get into the on campus clinic, and after driving around town he has been impressed with how modern the hospitals look. However, that is about the extent of his experience. Michal, on the other had, had to go to the emergency room a couple of years ago to receive treatment for a large burn he got on his arm when handling hot grease in the kitchen. He thought the six-hour wait was ridiculous when all he got was a couple of standard tests and some burn relief cream. He stated that a wait this long that would not have happened in Poland, even in a public hospital. Another thing that shocked him were the bills that came to him in the mail. Even though the school was paying for the ER visit, the bills were still sent to his apartment and knew it added up to a couple of thousand dollars. They were both aware of how much Americans spend each year for health insurance and they both thought it was too much. In the end, they both said that even

though the wait in line was often long back home, the financial burden that Americans face outweighs the benefits.

Brazil

Yuri Garanito and Nicholas (Nick) Theunissen were born in the early and mid 1990s in Brazil after the establishment of the country's Unified Health System (Pinto et al. 2012). Nick has not had very much interaction with the United States health care system, but he is impressed by how intricate all of buildings he has seen are. He knows America struggles with health care costs and thinks the cost of buildings could be why. Yuri, on the other hand, has had a couple of experiences of his own that have gone well. His junior year of college he got an infection on his arm and was able to get in to see an on campus doctor the next day. He said that there is no way something like that would happen in Brazil on public health plan, but is common with private primary care physicians. He was also impressed when he had a serious pain in his wisdom teeth that he was able to get them taken out in such a short amount of time. Since he is no longer apart of collegiate athletics, he has to pay the same insurance fees that Daan has to pay. He thinks is it crazy how much Americans are willing to pay for how little most people use, but understands that it is just how the system works.

The Take Away

We all know that the American health system has its issues with management and control of rising costs, and while this problem should not be taken lightly, it is refreshing to see what Millennials from other countries think about the U.S. system (Kaplan and Porter, 2011). Gaining insight from other cultures can help us see more than just our flaws, but also our strengths that we should be proud of. Moving forward, it is important that we add value in a way minimizes the reduction of our strengths that have been quickly noted by Millennials from around the world.

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