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Training the generation Y plastic surgeon

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Correspondence and Communications

Training the generation Y plastic surgeon

Dear Sir,

We are two generation X plastic surgeons trained by the previous generation, the Baby Boomers. We are currently practicing during the peak years of our career, and to be quite honest, we consider ourselves to be doing pretty well.

A new generation evolves every 15 to 20 years. It is now our turn to train and support the next generation of plastic surgeons: The Millennials or Generation Y, born between the years 1980–2001. Millennials learn and work in a different manner compared to the previous three generations¹ and thus it's important to understand their viewpoints in order to help them reach their full potential and avoid intergenerational tensions.

Every generation has its own strengths that reflect the current state and needs of society. This constitutes their advantage with respect to previous generations. Our generation X, is considered independent, industrious, resourceful, innovative risk-takers, decisive problem-solvers, voracious learners,² and we like to regard these as good qualities in plastic surgeons. However, the world is constantly changing. Millennials are the first true digital generation; they have

been using internet and social media from an early age and due to this may have short attention spans that has cultivated them to be visual learners and capable of processing and adapting information.^{1,3,4} They are team-oriented and feel comfortable with frequent social interactions.^{1,5} Millennials have also been described to be a “child-centric generation” and they have had very close parental involvement in their childhood.¹ They are best rewarded with meaningful work.³ It is obvious that millennials differ significantly from previous generations by being tech-savvy and visual learners, with short attention span and a desire for feedback. [Table 1](#) provides a crude overview of the do's and don'ts on how to deal with millennials with our proposals. It must be noted that not all individuals fit into this definition, but social anthropologists have found that different generations tend to have a different outlook on core values and attitudes and have different views on life and styles of teaching and learning⁵.

Rather than seeing these differences as obstacles, we feel that the Millennials are an asset to our plastic surgery community. It would be all too easy to teach the Millennials as we were once trained. However, the Millennials learn best when using their natural strengths. We, as the previous generation need to appreciate this and adapt ourselves in order to train them most effectively. By paying attention to our attitudes, we can face together the challenges of the new world.

Table 1 Short overview of do's and don'ts for training the Millennials, *italics our proposals*.

	How to incorporate into training	Avoid in training	Reference
Visual learning	Charts, diagrams <i>Infographics</i>	Goals in writing	Schenarts, P. J. Now arriving: surgical trainees from generation Z. <i>J Surg Educ</i> 2019.
	Pictures, graphics	Traditional lectures with written slides. Avoid telling what to do	Aaron, M., Levenberg, P. The Millennials in medicine: tips for teaching the next generation of physicians. <i>Journal of Academic Ophthalmology</i> 2014;7:e017-e020.
	Kinesthetic learning, bedside teaching <i>More personal involvement in OR teaching</i>	How I do it Lectures/monologues	Evans, K. H., Ozdalga, E., Ahuja, N. The medical education of generation Y. <i>Acad Psychiatry</i> 2016;40:382-385
Short attention span	Shorter sessions	Lengthy meetings lectures Long conversations reading long texts	Aaron, M., Levenberg, P. The Millennials in medicine: tips for teaching the next generation of physicians. <i>Journal of Academic Ophthalmology</i> 2014;7:e017-e020. Schenarts, P. J. Now Arriving: Surgical Trainees From Generation Z. <i>J Surg Educ</i> 2019.
Tech-savvy	Incorporate up-to-date technology, such as online modules and Podcasts, short video segments like on YouTube	Less focus on textbooks and lecture slides	Aaron, M., Levenberg, P. The Millennials in medicine: tips for teaching the next generation of physicians. <i>Journal of Academic Ophthalmology</i> 2014;7:e017-e020. Louie, M., Moulder, J. K., Wright, K., Siedhoff, M. Mentoring Millennials in surgical education. <i>Curr Opin Obstet Gynecol</i> 2019;31:279-284.
Reward	Provide reasoning for tasks, provide feedback Regular development discussion/performance appraisals Engaging the residents, empowering them as valued and contributing members of the team	Do not expect them to know they are valued	Evans, K. H., Ozdalga, E., Ahuja, N. The medical education of generation Y. <i>Acad Psychiatry</i> 2016;40:382-385 Evans, K. H., Ozdalga, E., Ahuja, N. The medical education of generation Y. <i>Acad Psychiatry</i> 2016;40:382-385

Declaration of Competing Interest

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