

Millennials - how the 'Net Generation' will shape the future of self-care



A look at the UK findings from the Be Your Best 2019 report

Millennials often get a bad press in the media and it's not uncommon for those born between 1981 and 1996, aka the Net Generation, to be referred to as the 'snowflake generation'.

However, findings from the new "**Be Your Best 2019 – Empowering the Net Generation to Make the Most of Self-Care**" report, published last month, reveal that far from being smart-phone selfie obsessives, who rarely prioritise health-checks and GP appointments, millennials have a unique take on self-care. They are distinctively resourceful when using traditional health support and modern technology to meet their health needs.

Unlike previous generations, who largely relied on the advice and treatments from the local family GP or pharmacist, the Net Generation have a robust appreciation of using fast, digital information sources online. They predominantly utilise technology not only to gain an understanding of their own health concerns, but to also source and purchase remedies online too – more than one in ten UK consumers¹ use an online pharmacy and the number is growing. This reflects a global trend, with online pharmacies already being very common in China and Russia².

The insights from the study of over 2,000 UK millennial consumers¹, 75 UK GPs and 75 UK pharmacists² offer a window into both the consumer and health habits. To truly be at the forefront of future pharma and over-the-counter provision, Sanofi UK recognises that it's crucial to learn from and embrace the self-care trajectory of this generation. By doing so, Sanofi UK will be supporting a more sustainable healthcare system for generations to come.

Chief among the report's findings is this generation's focus on the value of wellness, how it recognises the wisdom of accessing information from healthcare professionals, including pharmacists, and its strong appreciation for time saving and convenience as a consumer. Here are the self-care priorities in more detail:

Wellness: for the Net Generation, wellness is not a fad; it's a way of life. They associate self-care with keeping fit, feeling good and managing stress. Take a look at any Net Generation Instagram account (users under 35 make up more than **70 percent** of Instagram's more than 800 million active accounts worldwide³) and observers will immediately discover that this is a generation that exercises more, eats healthier, smokes and drinks less than previous ones.

They also strive for a better work-life balance, take care of their mental health and monitor their bodies to detect problems early. With wellness being such an important concept for this generation, it is an area that will influence trends in everything from food and drink to fashion.

Information: As digital natives, the Net Generation are continually searching for relevant and credible information to inform their purchases; knowledge is simultaneously the top driver and the top barrier to self-care. Sanofi UK's research also indicated that while the internet remains an important tool for accessing information on general wellbeing and minor health conditions, millennials still place a high value on visits to their GP or pharmacist for more serious concerns.

In stating their preferred sources of information, UK consumers cited internet research (40%) and specific health websites (23%) as preferred sources of information, closely matched by visits to the pharmacist or GP which scored (31%) and (27%) respectively¹.

For those UK consumers that had recently received an over-the-counter or non-prescription treatment, traditional and online pharmacies remain the preferred channel (40% and 10%, respectively), followed closely by supermarkets (40%)¹.



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Time and convenience: the UK Net Generation prefer visiting a pharmacy for OTC product purchases to scheduling a GP appointment. However, over reliance on and conflicting self-diagnosis via 'Dr Google' remains an issue for those surfing the web to better understand their ailments. While two-thirds (67%)¹ of the UK Net Generation believe that they perform self-care sufficiently to maintain a good level of health, 72% of UK GPs and 63% of UK pharmacists² believe that their patients are not performing self-care sufficiently.

This sentiment was echoed by healthcare professionals themselves, with as little as 12% of UK GPs and 23% of UK pharmacists² feeling well informed about the options available for patients to seek self-care solutions. This underlines the current challenge for policymakers and the NHS alike in encouraging patients and HCPs to transition to a self-care focused approach to prevention and treatment.

Notably, the 'Be Your Best 2019' report identified **access to information** as an integral element of key actions governments, industry and other stakeholder could take. How do we achieve this? Among suggestions were specialised, individually tailored phone apps and partnerships with stakeholders to develop and support initiatives for easily accessible information.

Another area for recommendation identified by the report included better **access to healthcare professionals:** easier access to GPs, pharmacists and other healthcare decision-makers. Recommendations include 'e-consultations' and the use of face-to-face remote technology.

The 'Be Your Best 2019' findings echo the recommendations from Sanofi UK's Power of Prevention report, launched earlier this year, which called on the Government to consider developing a national self-care strategy, in conjunction with NHS England and Public Health England. In that study, UK GPs were in agreement on consumers relying less on medical professionals and more on personal responsibility for self-care.

While there are clearly a number of challenges ahead, the coming of age of the world's two billion Net Generation consumers could be a defining moment for global self-care. It will inspire an era of smart technology, e-commerce and data-led solutions, as well as new, innovative products.

Fabio Mazzotta, Head of North and South Europe CHC, agrees: "Our research reveals the complexity of the self-care landscape in the UK and we hope that through providing insight into these issues, we can provide the NHS with a compelling call to action to improve the awareness of self-care practices amongst both consumers and HCPs.

"As a business, we are committed to empowering patients to prevent illnesses and diseases before they begin and avoid additional cost pressures to local healthcare services and the wider NHS. In pursuing this goal, we want consumers to play an active role in managing their health and wellbeing, and for this to happen, there needs to be the appropriate education and training programmes in place for HCPs across the NHS."



Fabio Mazzotta
Head of North and
South Europe CHC,
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¹ UK survey was commissioned by Sanofi UK in July 2019. Research was conducted by One Poll - an independent market research agency - that surveyed 2,000 people born between 1981 and 1996

² Sanofi, Be Your Best 2019 - Empowering the Net Generation to Make the Most of Self-Care, 2019, 75 pharmacists and 75 general physicians (GPs) were questioned in each of the eight local markets, including the UK

³ Users under 35 make up more than 70 percent of Instagram's more than 800 million active accounts worldwide. <https://blog.hootsuite.com/instagram-demographics/>