

Attitudes, Lifestyles, Priorities: Providing Nutrition Services to Six Unique Generations



MEMBERS OF THE MILLENNIAL generation (Gen Y) tend to eat more vegetables than their parents—baby boomers and Gen X.¹ For Generation Z, the most important consideration when choosing food is the price.² These are only two among countless examples of how generations differ in their views of food and nutrition.

This matters to us a great deal: By 2027, there will be six unique generations in the American consumer marketplace. How can we best support registered dietitian nutritionists (RDNs) and nutrition and dietetics technicians, registered in this era of unprecedented diversity and change, *and* best serve our patients and clients from such a variety of generations?

Recently the Academy's Board of Directors received a very interesting briefing by our Public Member, Dave Donnan, partner emeritus at A.T. Kearney, where he led the global food and beverage sector in the company's Consumer Products & Retail practice. Donnan spoke on two of the company's reports that are relevant to the Academy and to our members' leadership potential—now and in coming years.

"America's Next Commercial Revolution: Influence vs. Affluence" addresses in part the enormous influence in the coming years of Gen Z, which, by 2027, will represent 30% of the world's population. According to this report, the six generations of US consumers will be:

- The Silent Generation (those born between 1928 and 1945; 14 million people)
- Baby Boomers (1946-1964; 66 million)
- Gen X (1965-1980; 65 million)
- Millennials (1981-1997; 80 million)
- Gen Z (1998-2016; 82 million)
- Alpha Gen (2017-; 43 million).³

Donnan also discussed a second A.T. Kearney report, "Health@250,"⁴ that explores a range of possible outcomes for the future of health care between now and 2026—the 250th anniversary of our country's founding. The report examines "seven drivers of change shaping the future of health" that include "Demographic Shifts: Wealthy, Not Healthy vs. Healthy, Not Wealthy." Both of these reports are well worth reading by all Academy members.

GENERATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

"Even though there is a wide gap of characteristics that define each generation, it is important to remember that all people, no matter what the generation, still have individual differences and aren't always truly defined or 'stereotyped' by their generation," says Academy member Lisa Roberson, RDN, LD, of Bowling Green, KY, corporate director of wellness at Morrison Healthcare and chair of the Academy's Council on Future Practice.

"People are still people. And all people, no matter what the generation, have the *same expectations*—whether they are an employer, employee, or customer. Sometimes the delivery of these expectations requires a generational adaptation or a full audible in order to create relevance in the message or to even ensure the message is heard," Roberson says.

"We must be able to adapt quickly and resiliently to change and also learn to provide succinct, key messages, or 'bite-sized' information, to the emerging generations," notes Roberson. "Generation Z is already becoming reliant on programs that use artificial intelligence. RDNs will need to find opportunities to integrate their knowledge into medical nutrition programs that may involve using AI.

"Dietitians must be ready to embrace a more prescriptive approach of providing individualized nutrition recommendations using emerging tools such as nutrigenomics," Roberson says.



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BE FLEXIBLE

We must be willing and able to "flex" if we expect to remain relevant to emerging generations. In the coming years, the ways we educate, the nutrition recommendations that we make, and even the foods that we eat, will likely be incredibly different. Let's be ready to rise up and meet the demands of a multi-generational world.

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