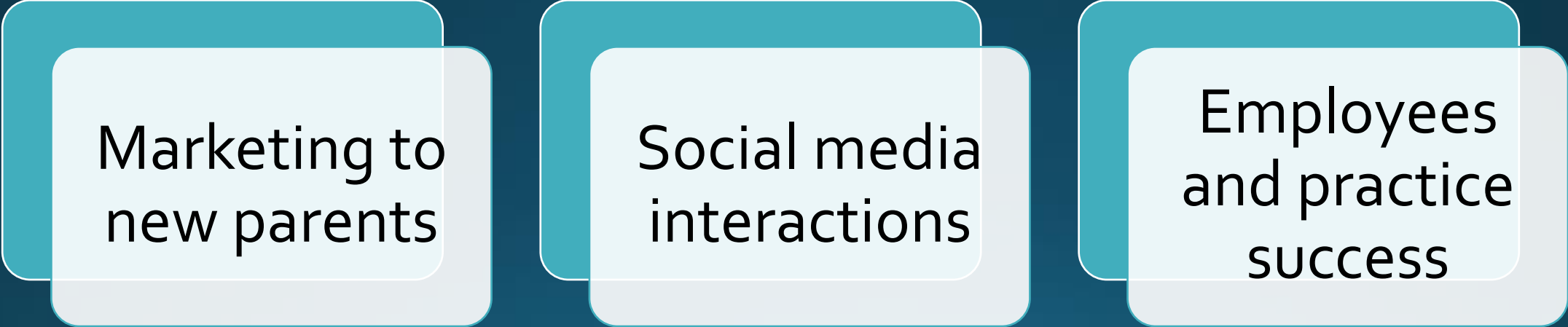


# Surviving the Pandemic: Maintaining patient volume and staffing through COVID-19

Roy Benaroch, MD, FAAP

- Owner-Physician, Pediatric Physicians, PC in Alpharetta/Roswell
- Assistant Adjunct Professor of Pediatrics, Emory
- Chair, The Children's Care Network
- I have no relevant financial disclosures
- I will not be discussing off-label use of any medications
- Twitter: @PedInsider
- Blog: PediatricInsider.com
- RoyBenaroch.com
- Thanks to Children's Healthcare of Atlanta's Strategic Planning Department and Athenahealth, Inc for data and insights

# Pandemic practice survival



Marketing to  
new parents

Social media  
interactions

Employees  
and practice  
success

What has  
changed?

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New competitors

---

New parents

---

New expectations

---

New referral sources

---

*What can we do to compete effectively?*

COVID-19

# New Competitors

- Retail/pharmacy clinics\*
  - 2000: 0
  - 2010: 1200
  - 2017: 2800
- Urgent care centers\*\*
  - 2014: 6400
  - 2018: 8100
- Telemedicine – explosion since COVID
  - Third parties
  - Direct marketing by insurance companies

\*Rand Corp; \*\*Consumer Reports

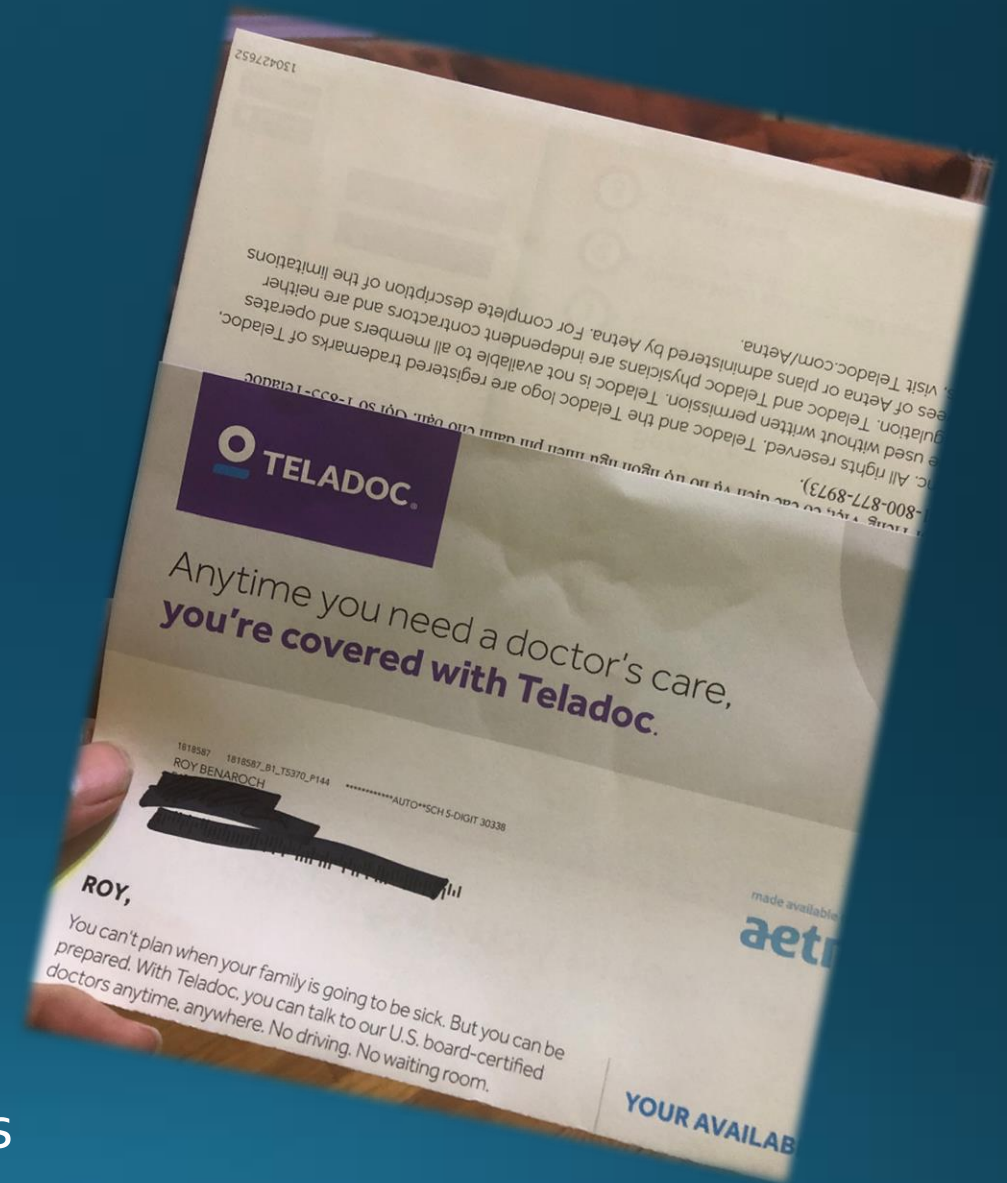


Photo: Roy Benaroch

# New Competitors – The Good News

- Pediatricians are perceived as best source of pediatric care
  - This has not changed
  - In Atlanta market, 98% of parents took their child to a pediatrician in the last 12 months
- Parents of all generations prefer to obtain care from their own pediatrician
- Other sources are considered a “last resort”
  - But convenience still matters

# Have parents changed?

Adult-centered families  
Children not the focus  
Parents offered life lessons/teaching  
Children sent off to play on their own

1950

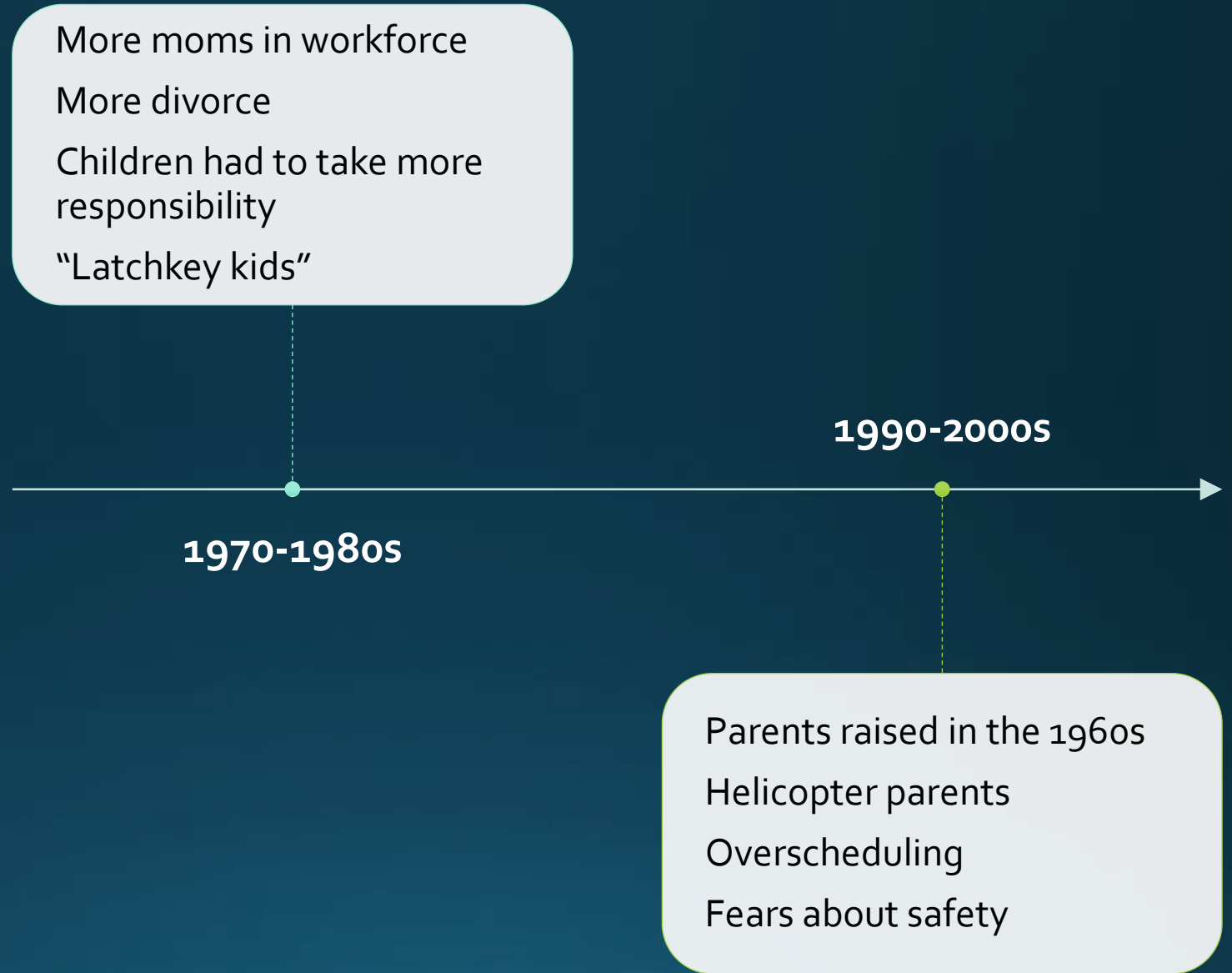


Photo by [Vasilios Muselimis](#) on [Unsplash](#)

1960

More permissiveness, more creativity  
World was becoming wider and more open-minded  
The age of exploration

# Have parents changed?





# Demographic changes



Average age of mom, first baby

1990 – 25  
2015 – 28



What percentage of young women are moms (age 20-35)?

2000 – 57%  
2016 – 48%



US Birthrate is now at 32 year low, with especially high declines for teen moms



Percent of parents who are married couples

1950 – 93%  
2000-2010- 68%



Single moms – more often a choice



Fathers are spending *more* time with kids

1960s – 16 minutes a day  
Now – 59 minutes a day



2 – 3.7 million children in US have an LGBTQ parent; some raised by same-sex couples

Sources: About, Inc; Census.gov

# Who are parents now?

## Millennials

- Born ~1980-1997
- Now young adults
- 2019: The year the millennials overtook the boomers in number as the largest generation
- 82% of US births in 2016 were to Millennials

# What makes millennials different?



- Grew up with the internet
- Rely on technology
  - Leisure
  - Connections and communication
  - Knowledge and information and expertise
- Eager to use and share opinions on social media
- Both creators and users of social media information

# Millennial statistics: Comparisons

- Less money than Boomers at same age
  - Lower earnings, fewer assets, more debt
  - Slower to own homes
  - More money to rent, student loans
- 25% marry by age 32 (Boomers: 50%)
- 34% visit retail clinics (twice the rate of Boomers)
- 54% skip/delay care because of costs (twice rate of Boomers)



Photo by [Glenn Carstens-Peters](#) on [Unsplash](#)

# Millennial statistics



25%, if cannot get through to make an appointment, will give up



92% will switch medical providers if not satisfied



54% check online reviews of their medical providers



60% will share negative experiences with friends



90% trust online health information



77% start a search for new doctor online



74% want to book appointments online and pay online



71% want mobile apps to manage health

Source: Athenahealth

# What Millennial parents want

- Personal relationship and trust with provider\*
- Provider availability
  - “After hours”
    - Early morning, late afternoon, weekends, evenings
    - Nurse advice lines to supplement care
  - Asynchronous communication via Texting, Messaging
  - Telemedicine availability – preferred with usual provider
  - Would like to see same provider for wells, especially when babies are young
- Same-day sick availability – a hot button
  - Parents will switch peds to get this
- They want personalized care, where and when and how they want
  - (Like banking, personal transportation, other industries)

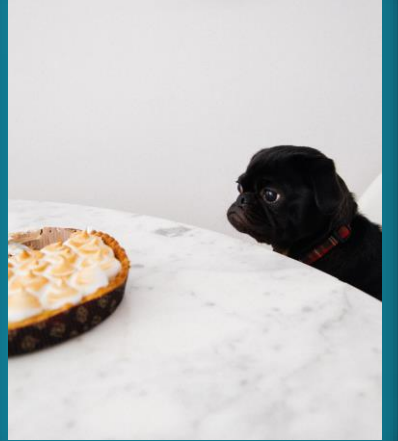


Photo by [Charles PH](#) on [Unsplash](#)

# \*Who millennials trust



- They do trust MDs/Dos – doctors – but not necessarily more than other providers
  - Boomers still put more value in physicians over other providers – another shift
- Personal relationship is more important than degrees
- Quality is assumed

# What Millennial parents don't want



They do not want to come to the office unless necessary



They do not want to coordinate their lives around their doctor's schedule

If they do go in, want quick visits at flexible times that fit their schedules

They don't or can't miss work



They do not want to wait

30-45 mins reasonable for *total* visit time sick encounter



They do not want hassle

Easy, fast, on a smartphone



# Millennials adore technology



Scheduling

0300 AM ear pain?  
Twisted ankle during football game?



Reminders

*Expect* text reminders



Telemedicine

Secure, synchronous, HIPAA OK  
Safe



Check in/Forms

No paper –safer, more private, less waste  
Speeds the process, prevents  
duplication/repetitiveness



Follow-up instructions



Visit notes/labs/x-ray results

## Millennials expect ease of communication

- Want to communicate after hours via email or other messaging platforms
- Billing
  - Paying, setting up payment plans
- Scheduling
  - Making/cancelling/changing appointments
- Medical advice for new problems
- Follow-up on existing problems

# Telemedicine?

- Parents very interested
  - *40% of millennials say availability of telemedicine is "extremely important" or "very important" when selecting health insurance*
- Parents very interested *if offered by their own pediatrician*
- Less interest in Telemed from third parties and insurance-sponsored sites – but expect this to change
- Quickly becoming widely available
- If you don't offer, someone will
- Georgia laws (in effect 1/1/2020, without sunset)
  - Providers licensed in other states may Telemed
  - Inscos must cover Telemed



# How millennials choose their pediatrician

- Neighbors/friends/family
- Online reviews
- Online forums (e.g. “Mommy blogs”, Facebook)
- Insurance website
- Practice website
- Less important:
  - OB/Midwife recommendations
  - Rounding at hospital

# Social media participation

- Should your practice have a Facebook/Twitter/Instagram/Blog?
  - For now: good, but not required
- Watch privacy issues
- Be mindful, consistent, and precise about how you portray your practice
  - Science-based? Earthy/crunchy? Environment? Social issues?
- Have a social media “champion” or leader
- Not every physician has to participate

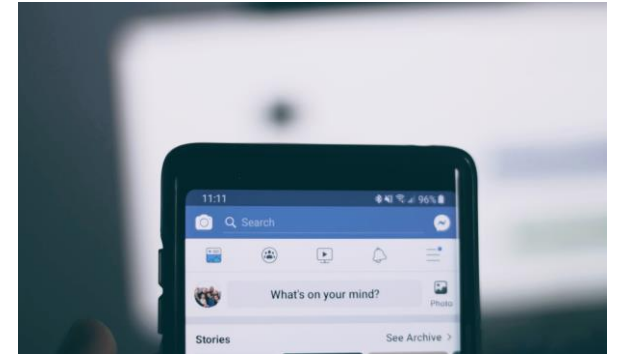


Photo by [Joshua Hoehne](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Photo by [Sara Kurfeß](#) on [Unsplash](#)

# Social media content

- Brief, interesting posts in moderation
- Too many messages are as bad as too few
- Hot topics – avoid or embrace?
  - Vaccines, Circumcision, GMOs, Politics, LGBTQ, Fluoride
- Medical topics of general interest – more welcome
  - COVID, Nutrition, development, safety, medical problems
- Personal interest (Docs & staff) – should be *most* of your posts
  - Stories, videos, fundraisers, travel
  - Don't brag; beware privacy





**Pediatric Physicians, PC**

Published by Roy Benaroch [?] · 10 hrs · 🌐

We have a new family joining our practice! They said they didn't mind a few photos.



**Get More Likes, Comments and Shares**

This post is performing better than 95% of other posts on your Page.  
Boost it to get more great results.

**1,266**

People Reached

**554**

Engagements

[Boost Post](#)



7 Comments 7 Shares

# Managing reviews online



Photo by [Adam Jang](#) on [Unsplash](#)

- OK to solicit reviews
- Respond to positive reviews with thanks
- Respond to negative reviews with follow-up
  - Watch privacy concerns!
- Some negative reviews are OK
  - Lends authenticity
- Consider 3<sup>rd</sup> party management and use of a “funnel”





2 reviews

★★★★★

2 months ago

We love Pediatric Physicians! When our children were younger we moved to this practice as we were not satisfied with our previous pediatrician. Since joining pediatric physicians we have been so happy with how they treat us and our ...

More

Like

Share


Response from the owner

2 months ago

Thank you for the kind words!

Edit

Delete



1 review

★☆☆☆☆

2 weeks ago

Worst experience ever in the Roswell office. Take your business to a different company.

Like

Share


Response from the owner

2 weeks ago

We've reached out to you to get more details and see what we need to do better. We're sorry you had a bad experience at our office.

Edit

Delete



Local Guide · 29 reviews

★★★★★

6 months ago

We love this practice! We take our daughter there and have found the staff and doctors to be extremely warm and welcoming. They stay at the leading edge of medical science and really know how to help new parents. When we visited them on ...

More

Like

Share

Response from the owner

6 months ago

Thank you!

Edit

Delete

# Your online portal

- Clumsy or poorly designed? Think again
- Needs to be truly functional to drive traffic
- Encourage, but don't insist, on use
- Core Features
  - Bill pay
  - Scheduling
  - Messaging
  - Medical information



# Employees and practice success

- Most interactions are with staff, not doctors/providers
- Some may have interest in social media, but be wary
- Using down time
  - Fill empty appointment slots
  - Recall lists
    - Waiting lists
    - Follow-up “ticklers”
    - Quality measures – HEDIS – due Vaccine lists
  - Personal calls more effective than texts or emails
  - Beware oversaturation
  - Other staff time: organizing, inventory, digitizing

# Staffing challenges - COVID

- New jobs are outpacing employees – tight market
- New recruitment strategies
  - Indeed, Nextdoor, Facebook
- Word-of-mouth
- Incentives for referrals
- Market to your patient families via social media
- Consider short-term help from older patients
  - Can quickly/easily/inexpensively get CNA certificate
  - Better than “shadowing” for their resumes
- Pay is important, but so is flexibility, benefits
- Consider: off site “Telework” for new or existing employees



# Your personal touch is still important

- Need to show authentic care and concern
- Parents remember what you say, and want to feel heard
- They know if you and your staff care
- Bedside manner is key to building trust and loyalty
  - Keep patients
  - Get new patients
  - Avoid lawsuits
  - Practice good medicine