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## **Millennial generation wants cooperation in health care, according to Wesleyan forum**

By Alex Gecan

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MIDDLETOWN >> Dozens of medical professionals crammed into Wesleyan University lecture hall Thursday to find out what the kids these days want from their doctors--and the answer, it seems, is cooperation.

At the eighth annual Weitzman Symposium, expert speakers and panels of professionals discussed issues of access between patients and doctors, as well as the sometimes unreliable relationship between primary-care physicians and specialists. Roughly 150 health care professionals and other attendees took part in an all-day lecture and seminar series at Beckham Hall. Speakers touched on topics from state health policy to health care referrals to "What millennials expect from health care." The "millennial" generation usually refers to people born between 1980 and 2000.

The star of the "millennial" show was 17-year-old Trevor Torres, a high school senior from Clarkston, Mich., who gave a presentation early in the day that grew out of his interaction with the doctors who have treated his type-1 diabetes, asthma and other conditions.

Torres talked about the various successes and failures of his health care professionals as he's consulted them over the years, either for regular appointments or when he would begin a new sport and wanted to make sure his diet was in line with his new physical requirements. He encouraged heavy one-on-one interaction between doctors and patients early in treatment, but said that patients should be heavily involved with their own research as well.

"If your patient doesn't need you anymore, you win," Torres said.

Given the more widespread availability of medical information, Torres said doctors can now guide patients to their own decisions on how to manage treatment and act as expert consultants as well as primary care providers. He said the more patients doctors can help to become self-reliant, the more patients doctors can help.

"Sick people are a renewable resource," Torres joked.

There are always more people who can be helped, he said.

A panel discussion followed, consisting of Torres and three medical professionals, who agreed that younger patients are generally proactive to the point of stubbornness.

"Most millennials don't like to be told what to do," said Kara Ellis, lead dietician for the Community Health Center. "I can create a diet with my eyes closed for most of you out there, but are you going to follow it? Unlikely."

Brooke Lloyd, a post-doctoral psychology resident, echoed the panel's assessment of young patients.

"Millennial patients tend to want to know more about research, about the therapy process," said Lloyd.

The concept of shared decision-making, as presented by Torres and the panel, encouraged a model of informal consultation following the intensive one-one-one period. Torres proposed a sort of electronic

on-call system, where his provider or a deputy would be available by text message if minor questions came up from day to day, rather than regimented appointments.

In terms of mental health concerns, Torres said that his generation was still keeping their maladies quiet, but there is still progress in that area in terms of removing the stigma of mental health issues and discussing them more openly.

The symposium was organized by the Weitzman Center for Innovation in Community Health and Primary Care and the CHC.

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