The Opinion of Millennials

Stanford T. Shulman, MD

In March, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) released a new policy statement that supports civil marriage rights for parents and for foster or adoptive parents of children, regardless of the parents’ sexual orientation. The US Supreme Court will soon issue its ruling on several key same-sex issues.

We pediatricians should be reassured by the growing body of data that indicates that children raised by same-sex couples have similar emotional and behavioral development as those raised by heterosexual couples. As summarized in the AAP policy statement, an estimated 2 million children in the US are now being raised by gay and lesbian parents.

The US public’s opinions on the issue of gay marriage and other social issues such as the decriminalization of marijuana are changing at a remarkable pace, as reflected in polling data covered in *The New York Times* in April. The polls demonstrate that it is most strikingly the millennial generation, which includes those born in 1981 or later, whose opinions are changing most rapidly on these issues. This generation includes the young parents in our pediatric practices, and thus it is of some importance that we predate both these generations recognize this dynamic.

Indeed, in *The New York Times* piece, written by Charles Blow, he notes that millennials’ views often differ dramatically from those of older Americans: fully 70% of millennials favor same-sex marriage (a 40% increase from 2003 to 2013), with no change among generation Xers born between 1946 and 1964, and those among us who predate both these generations recognize this dynamic.

The trend is for millennials to continue leading the way toward changing social views. We older folks need to be cognizant of this trend, whether or not our personal views change over time, so that our ability to connect with our patients’ parents is not compromised.

**THIS MONTH’S STAMPS**

This month, I have selected 2 interesting but very different souvenir sheets issued by Malawi in 2012. One was issued to support the National AIDS Commission of Malawi and exhorts citizens to, “Plan your future. Go for an HIV test.” In the background, a male nurse or technician, presumably, obtains blood from a woman by fingerstick. The 5 individual stamps depict a heterosexual couple, 2 gloved hands obtaining blood by fingerstick, blocks spelling “STOP AIDS” and “STOP HIV,” and a “happy” condom with the respective messages, “Use a Condom,” and “Female Condom Empowering Women.” Malawi has one of the highest HIV rates in the world. Estimates by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, UNAIDS are that 910,000 Malawians live with HIV, including 10% of adults aged 15 to 49 years and 170,000 children aged 14 years and younger. In addition, there are 610,000 children aged younger than 17 years who have been orphaned because their parents have died of AIDS.
The second souvenir sheet highlights the Pan-African Tsetse and Trypanosomiasis (misspelled in the header!) Eradication Campaign (PATTEC) of the African Union. These stamps illustrate the tsetse fly vector (Glossina), a map of Malawi with designated red geographic “hot spots” of the disease, a man, and a zebu (also called a Brahman cow). In the east African nations of Uganda, Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia, Trypanosoma brucei rhodesiense causes African sleeping sickness, a very serious encephalopathy. The campaign emphasizes eradication of the tsetse fly vectors and minimizing bites of tsetse flies with insect repellents, wearing long sleeves and pants of neutral colors, and avoidance of heavily infested areas.

REFERENCES