
BARRIERS TO HEALTH CARE FOR PEOPLE ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM ACROSS ALL LEVELS OF INTELLECTUAL ABILITY

S. Dern¹, T. Sappok²

¹Aspies e.V., Aspies e.V., Berlin, Germany ; ²Department of Psychiatry, Ev. Krankenhaus Königin-Elisabeth Herzberge, Berlin, Germany

Introduction:

People on the autism spectrum are particularly vulnerable to various mental and somatic diseases. Admitting the health care system is, however, a prerequisite for appropriate diagnosis and treatment of these disorders. Substantial difficulties in accessing the health care system are reported for all autistic people, independent from their intellectual ability.

Aim:

The purpose of the work is first to assess various difficulties in accessing the health care system and second to provide strategies to overcome them.

Methods:

Current barriers to the health care system and possible solutions were sampled from a collaboration of autistic self-advocates and professionals in Berlin, Germany. The findings were endorsed by a thorough Internet and literature research.

Results:

A comprehensive list of barriers to health care along with recommendations to facilitate access was compiled. Strategies considering the perceptual and communicative peculiarities of autism improved access to health care for autistic adults.

Conclusions:

Providing access to the health care system may improve diagnosis and treatment of mental and somatic illnesses and hereby enhance quality of life in people on the autism spectrum. Recognition of the peculiarities and needs of adults with autism may serve as a model for other areas in society, such as education and employment. Data acquisition in this project is of special value because it results from collaboration of an autistic self-advocacy organization and professionals working in the field of intellectual disability, considering the experiences of autistic adults in the entire range of intellectual functioning.