

## **Mothers' Satisfaction with Emergency Care When Their Child Has an Autism Spectrum Disorder**

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**Abstract :** Introduction: The rising prevalence of autism spectrum disorders (ASD) has heightened the need to understand the challenges faced by children with ASD and their families in emergency departments (EDs). Children with ASD often experience additional health issues and heightened anxiety in the chaotic ED environment, which can impact their care and parental satisfaction. Purpose: This study aimed to examine factors identified by mothers as affecting their satisfaction with the care provided to their children in the ED, among mothers of children with ASD in comparison to mothers of children without ASD. Design and methods: In this correlational quantitative study, 128 Israeli mothers - 59 (46%) mothers of children with ASD and 69 (54%) of children without ASD - completed an online survey based on a Ministry of Health national survey of patient experience. Results: Mothers of children with ASD expressed lower satisfaction with the care provided. The difference was particularly evident concerning waiting times for examination of the child by nurses and physicians in the ED, whether the nurses were attentive and responsive to the mother's questions and concerns, whether the ED staff demonstrated coordination and cooperation with regard to medical care of the child, and whether work in the ED was conducted in an orderly and organized manner. The presence of communication difficulties in children predicted mothers' satisfaction with care. Conclusions: These findings suggest that certain needs of mothers and/or their children with ASD do not receive an appropriate response in the ED. Practice implications: It is important to raise the awareness of healthcare providers in EDs regarding the needs of children with ASD and their parents, especially children with communication difficulties. Strategies should be implemented to improve the experience of children with ASD and their parents in the ED.

**Keywords :** autism spectrum disorder, emergency department, parental satisfaction, healthcare challenges

**Conference Title :** ICN 2025 : International Conference on Nursing

**Conference Location :** Tokyo, Japan

**Conference Dates :** January 09-10, 2025