

PRESS RELEASE

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Parents of children with autism feel ill themselves

Zagreb – Parents of children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) assessed their own health much worse than the parents of healthy children, shows a study published in the new issue of Croatian Medical Journal.

The study included 350 parents from 29 Croatian municipalities, whose health was self-assessed by a standard SF-36 questionnaire. In comparison with parents of healthy children, parents of children with ASD scored lower on seven out of eight investigated areas of health: general health, mental health, bodily pain, role disability due to emotional problems and due to physical problems, and particularly on vitality and social functioning. Two groups of parents did not differ only in the area of physical functioning, which the authors explain by the fact that most of the participants were younger than 50.

Also, more than a third of parents of children with ASD stated that their health deteriorated in the previous year, whereas the same was claimed by only 17% of parents of healthy children. Mental and behavioral disorders were three times more frequent among parents of children with ASD than in other parents.

Most of the parents of children with ASD thought that enhancing economic, social, educational policy measures could advance their and their children's health and well-being. Some of these measures include sensitization and education of the society on the issue of ASD, advancing the educational system and integration of children with ASD in the society, categorizing autism as 100% disability and claiming the pertaining rights.

The new study confirms that the parents of children with ASD are particularly vulnerable and that parenting of such children is related to parents' impaired well-being.

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