

This study investigates healthcare access and quality among middle-aged and older adults with autism, offering insights into the current health status of this population and how healthcare access and quality influence overall quality of life. Building upon data from the TEACCH Autism Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, this research focuses on individuals diagnosed with autism between 1965 and 2000. Forty caregivers of autistic adults aged 40 and above were surveyed, exploring physician interaction and communication patterns, and healthcare accessibility, and healthcare satisfaction. Data analysis reveals that despite the prevalent challenges associated with autism across the lifespan, most autistic adults maintained stable health statuses, while others improved or declined over time. Moreover, healthcare quality was significantly associated with the physical health domain of quality of life. Access to healthcare emerged as a crucial factor, with increased access to healthcare appointments being associated with better quality of life across numerous domains. Lastly, autistic adults reported better healthcare quality and access to healthcare than their counterparts in the general and disability populations. Notably, autistic adults were less likely to understand their own healthcare compared to the general and disability population. This study underscores the need for focused research to improve physician communication and ensure that autistic adults understand and participate in their healthcare decisions. These findings highlight the critical need for enhanced healthcare communication to empower middle-aged and older adults with autism, ultimately shaping a more inclusive and effective healthcare experience.