

IMPLEMENTING AN AUTISM-FRIENDLY CARE MODEL IN A PEDIATRIC EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT: A QUALITY IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE

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BACKGROUND

The prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) has increased substantially, leading to a growing number of children with ASD presenting to pediatric emergency departments. Communication difficulties, sensory sensitivities, and heightened anxiety often create challenges for patients, families, and healthcare providers.

This project aimed to identify gaps in staff preparedness and implement an autism-friendly care model to improve care delivery.

AIM

To evaluate the impact of an autism-friendly care model on healthcare staff preparedness and family experience in a pediatric emergency department.

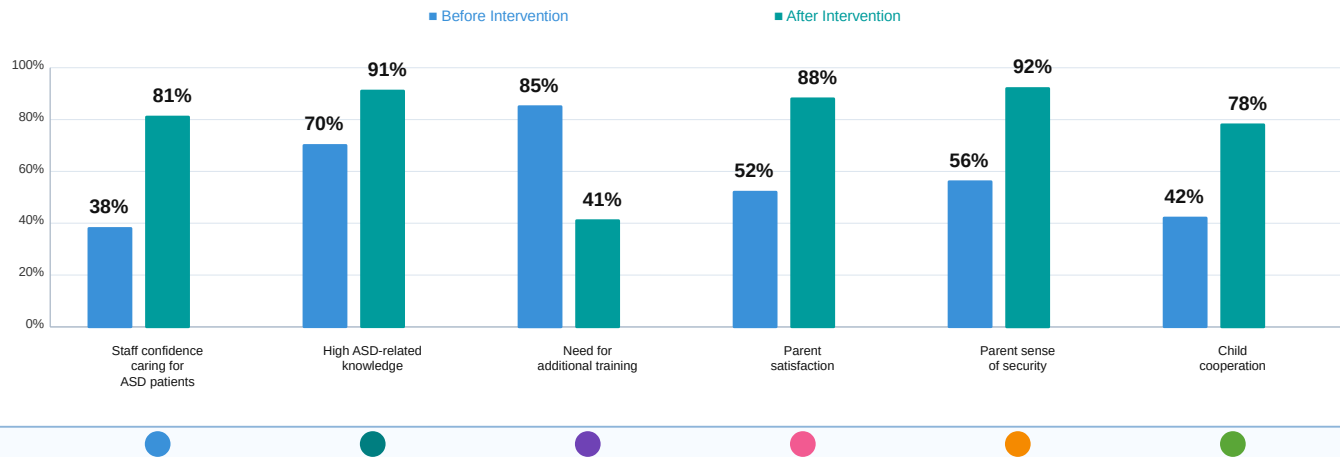
METHODS

- Pre-post quality improvement project.
- Conducted in the Pediatric Emergency Department, Carmel Medical Center, Israel.
- Baseline surveys: 53 healthcare professionals and 42 parents of children with ASD.
- Interventions included:

- Staff education and training
- Communication support tools
- Sensory resources
- Environmental adaptations
- Dedicated autism-friendly room

- Post-intervention surveys: 42 healthcare professionals and 23 parents.

RESULTS



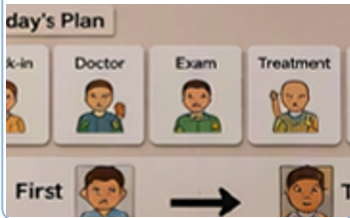
OUR AUTISM-FRIENDLY ROOM



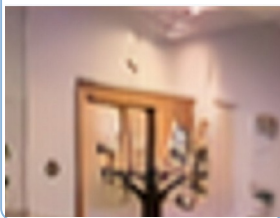
SENSORY CORNER



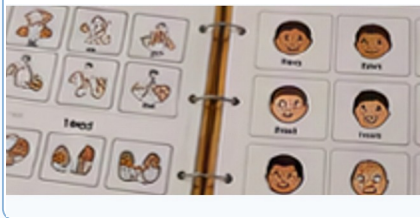
VISUAL SUPPORT TOOLS



CALMING ENVIRONMENT



COMMUNICATION TOOLS



CONCLUSIONS

Implementation of an autism-friendly care model was associated with significant improvements in staff preparedness, parental satisfaction, and child cooperation.

This low-cost multidisciplinary intervention may be easily adopted by pediatric emergency departments seeking to provide more accessible and patient-centered care for children with ASD and their families.

KEY MESSAGE



Simple environmental adaptations and targeted staff training can substantially improve emergency care experiences for children with ASD and their families.

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