

Healthcare costs for adults with autism more than double those for general population

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Researchers compared total annual healthcare costs for adults on the autism spectrum to costs for adults with attention-deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and adults in the general population and found them to be 20% and 70% higher, respectively. Adults on the spectrum also had increased use of specific services, such as primary care, mental health, and laboratory services, but lower use of gynecology visits and screening for cervical cancer. The study, "[Healthcare Service Utilization and Cost Among Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders in a U.S. Integrated Healthcare System.](#)" was coauthored by Ousseny Zerbo, PhD, and colleagues from Kaiser Permanente Northern California, Oakland and Santa Rosa, and is published in the preview issue of *Autism in Adulthood*.

"Most of what we know about autism comes from research on children. Zerbo and colleagues' study—the largest to date looking at the healthcare utilization of adults on the autism spectrum—highlights the importance of considering autism throughout the lifespan," says Christina Nicolaidis, MD, MPH, Portland State University and Oregon Health & Science University, Portland, Oregon and Editor-in-Chief of *Autism in Adulthood*.

Additional articles in the preview issue include two perspectives that envision a way to address the health disparities experienced by adults on the autism spectrum. "[Community Mental Health Services for Autistic Adults: Good News and Bad News](#)" focuses on the current state of community [mental health services](#) in the U.S. for autistic adults who

have co-occurring psychiatric conditions, such as depression or anxiety. Coauthors Brenna Maddox, PhD, Perelman School of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, and Valerie Gaus, PhD, a licensed clinical psychologist in Huntington, NY, highlight recent positive developments, summarize continuing barriers to providing affordable [mental health](#) care for this patient population, and provide recommendations for patients and their families, clinicians, and health system administrators.

In "[Workshop Report: Establishing Priority Research Areas to Improve the Physical Health and Well-Being of Autistic Adults and Older People.](#)" coauthors Georgina Warner, PhD and James Cusack, PhD, Autistica, London, U.K. and Jeremy Parr, MD, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, U.K. present the results of a collaborative workshop designed to identify priority research areas for improving the physical health and well-being of adults with autism.

"Both of these perspectives articles help us envision a path forward to addressing the health needs of adults on the autism spectrum," says Dr. Nicolaidis. "These discussions capitalize on the experience and wisdom of researchers, clinicians, autistic [adults](#), and families. *Autism in Adulthood* will serve as a home for such dialogue - and for the research and scholarship that is necessary to allow all [autistic adults](#) to lead healthy, fulfilling lives."

More information: Ousseny Zerbo et al, Healthcare Service Utilization and Cost Among Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders in a U.S. Integrated Healthcare System, *Autism in Adulthood: Knowledge, Practice, and Policy* (2018). [DOI: 10.1089/aut.2018.0004](https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2018.0004)

Brenna B. Maddox et al. Community Mental Health Services for Autistic Adults: Good News and Bad News, *Autism in Adulthood: Knowledge, Practice, and Policy* (2018). [DOI: 10.1089/aut.2018.0006](https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2018.0006)

Georgina Warner et al. Workshop Report: Establishing Priority Research Areas to Improve the Physical Health and Well-Being of Autistic Adults and Older People, *Autism in Adulthood: Knowledge, Practice, and Policy* (2018). [DOI: 10.1089/aut.2018.0003](https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2018.0003)

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