

HEALTH CARE FOR PEOPLE WITH AUTISM IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Trixler B¹, Boncz I², Szabó L³, Dinnyés KJ⁴, Pusztafalvi H¹

¹University of Pécs, Pécs, Hungary, ²University of Pécs, BUDAPEST, PE, Hungary, ³University of Pécs, Pécs, BA, Hungary, ⁴University of Pécs, Pécs, Hungary, Hungary

OBJECTIVES

In order to adapt to the changes caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the family and professionals have also tried to help people with autism by exchange of experience developing recommendations and procedures. The negative changes in their children’s condition and the lack of familiar support services were an additional source of stress.

METHODS

In the online, quantitative, cross-sectional questionnaire survey, 116 caregivers provided feedback on the characteristics and difficulties of their child’s health care during the pandemic. Mann-Whitney test and Chi-square test were used at 95% probability level (p<0.05), and results were evaluated using SPSS 23.0 software.

RESULTS

The sex ratio of people with autism was 25% female and 75% male, with a median age of 15 years (SD: ± 4.856 years). 61.2% had mild symptoms. 50% declared themselves to be in a poor financial situation. 20.7% of respondents did not receive any support from anyone. Sample most often used GP care and physiotherapy, bought over-the-counter medicines and herbs. 68.1% did not wear a mask. Only 5.2% had received professional autism care and only 13% felt that the epidemiological measures had been communicated clearly. Those infected with the virus showed a greater increase in symptoms of autism (p<0.001). In case of mild symptoms, they were more likely to perceive their health problems as resolved (p<0.001). People with moderate to severe symptoms were ill for longer periods (p<0.001). Parents of moderately and severely affected children scored significantly lower on the Hungarian version of the Satisfaction with Life Scale (p<0.001).

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the significant results, the research findings are not generalizable to the population, but they highlight the gaps in the care system and the difficulties faced by families. Through our research we would like to encourage the mapping of the needs of families and the characteristics of the care system.

TYPES OF PROBLEMS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC	PERCENTAGE
Psychological burden	87.1%
Financial difficulties	81%
Difficulty in accessing health care	68.1%

Table 1.
The three most prominent problems according to parents during pandemic (more response options in the questionnaire)

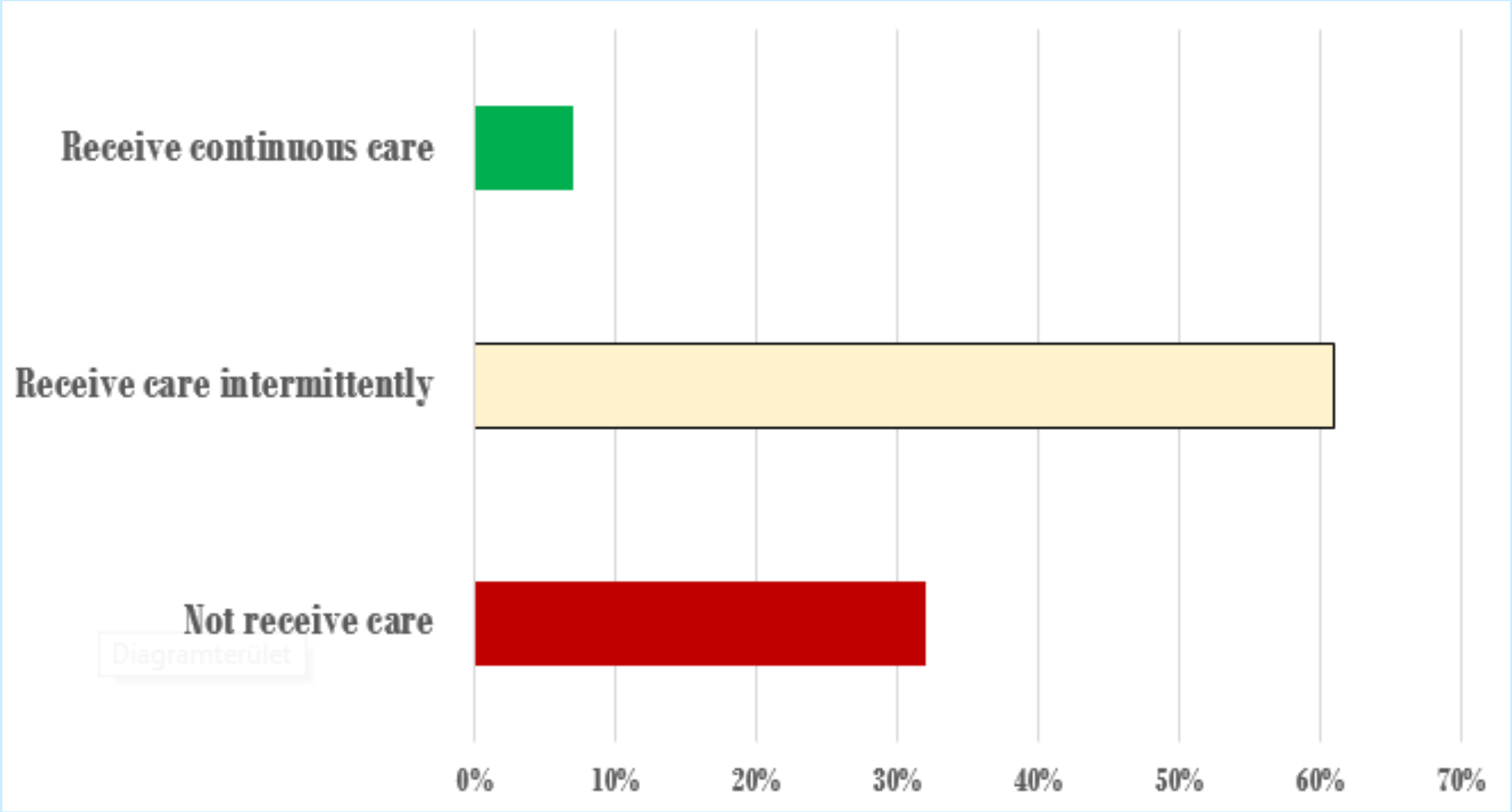


Figure 1.
Percentage of people with autism receiving institutional care (N=116)

TYPES OF PROBLEMS DURING HEALTHCARE	PERCENTAGE
Stress related to care	64.7%
No autism-friendly care	48.3%
Waiting time	40.5%

Table 2.
The most common problems in accessing healthcare (more response options in the questionnaire)

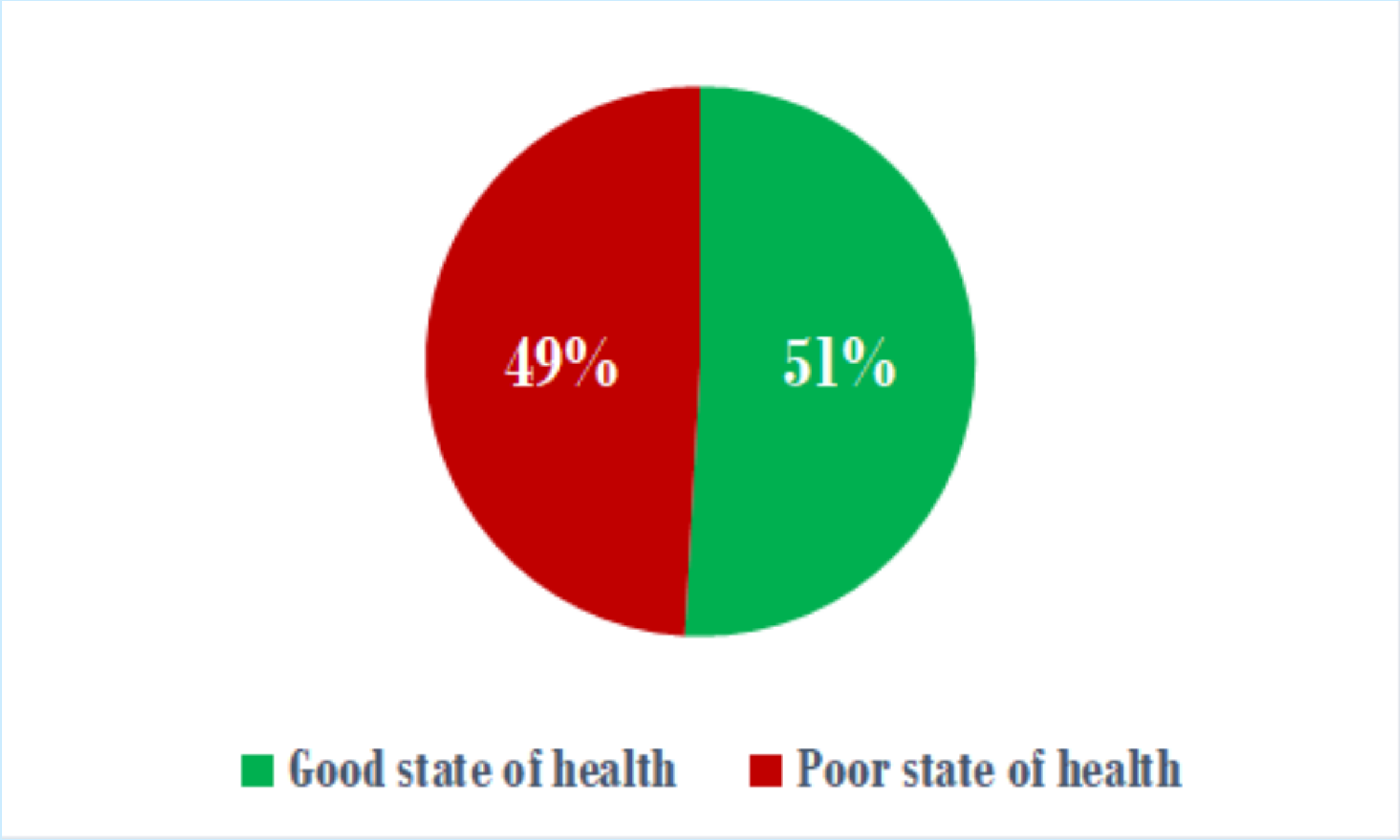


Figure 2.
Health status of children with autism as perceived by parents (N=116)



PCR 73

Corresponding author:
Dr. Imre BONCZ, MD, MSc, PhD, Habil
University of Pécs, Faculty of Health Sciences, Hungary
Institute for Health Insurance
E-mail: imre.boncz@etk.pte.hu