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Title: Migrant women's experiences of perinatal care in European countries: a systematic review

Authors:

Hora Soltani, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield. UK. h.soltani@shu.ac.uk

Frankie Fair, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield. UK.

Helen Watson, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield. UK.

Maria van den Muijsenbergh, Radboud University Medical Center, Netherlands.

Lisolette Raben, Radboud University Medical Center, Netherlands.

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Background

Across the whole of Europe, there are increasing numbers of migrant women who are of childbearing age, pregnant or new mothers. Migrant women face many challenges and have particular needs during the perinatal period. In this age of super-diversity, provision of maternity care which is sensitive to the needs of all factions of our society is paramount to ensure a healthy, prosperous and forward looking community.

Aim: As part of a larger multicentre study "Operational Refugee and Migrant Maternal Approach" (ORAMMA)*, this review aimed to evaluate the state of current evidence on migrant women's experiences of pregnancy, childbirth and maternity care in their destination country within Europe.

Methods

A systematic search of five databases was undertaken. Search terms such as "migrant", "maternity" and "experience" were combined using Boolean operators. A random subset of papers were double screened against inclusion criteria (e.g. articles published from 2007) and standardised data extraction tables and quality appraisal tools were used. A thematic synthesis of qualitative data was undertaken using Nvivo and AltasTi.

Results

Out of 7533 papers which were originally identified, 43 studies were included. These were from the UK, Sweden, Norway, Portugal, Netherlands, Ireland, Finland, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain and Switzerland. These revealed seven overarching themes relating to migrant women's experiences of perinatal care; access to care, communication, information needs, self-esteem, attitudes and psychological issues, socioeconomic and living conditions, quality of care, and specific conditions in the perinatal period.

Main messages

Migrant women need "trauma aware care" and culturally-competent, compassionate health professionals who listen to them and provide respectful, dignified and equitable perinatal care, undergirded by multidisciplinary team-working and continuity of care. They need models of perinatal care which go beyond clinical care and address their social and economic challenges.

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