

Access to and interventions to improve maternity care services for immigrant women: a narrative synthesis systematic review

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Background

Evidence suggests that in the UK approx 28.2% of all births are to foreign-born women. Maternal/perinatal mortality are higher among some immigrants depending on country of origin, indicating the presence of deficits in care pathways and birth outcomes.

Objectives

We undertook a systematic review and narrative synthesis of empirical research that focused on access and interventions to improve maternity care for immi-grant women, including qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods studies.

Review methods

An information scientist designed the literature database search strategies (published from 1990 to 2018).45,954 citations were independently screened by two team members We searched grey literature and contacted stakeholders with expertise.

Results

We included 40 studies. Immigrant women booked and accessed antenatal care later than the recommended first 10 weeks of pregnancy. Primary factors included limited English-language skills, lack of awareness of availability of the services, and understanding of the purpose of antenatal appointments, immigration status and income barriers. Immigrant women had mixed perceptions about care. Those with positive perceptions felt that professionals were caring, confidential and openly communicative. Those with negative views perceived professionals as rude, discriminatory or insensitive to their cultural and social needs.

Limitations

Our review findings are limited by the available research evidence related to our review questions. There may be aspects of immigrant women's experiences that we have not addressed. Few studies exist for perinatal mental health in immigrant women from Eastern European. Many studies included both immigrant and non-immigrant women]