

Summary

With global migration, the number of ethnic minority and migrant women receiving maternity health care in dominantly Anglo-European societies has increased significantly, but they consistently have among the worst pregnancy and maternal outcomes. In this paper, we analyse gaps in 'structural' (migration-related inequalities) and 'cultural' (responsiveness to ethno-cultural practices) competencies among maternal health practitioners. The analysis is based on interviews with practitioners, both ethnic and non-ethnic, who have uneven understanding and competencies arising from different positionalities and personal biographies. The results highlight significant barriers around language and communication, cultural stereotyping by professionals. Additionally, practitioners' own ethnic differences are inseparable from their approach to structural and cultural competencies; there was 'over-' or 'under-' reading of culture and its effects in pregnancy and differences in empathetic understanding of how ethnic women respond during labour and pregnancy. The findings reiterate the need for embodied understandings of structural and cultural competencies of practitioners.