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Abstract

South Africa is home to a wide range of cross border migrants and the provision of healthcare to this segment of the South African population has been a topical issue in different forums. There are reports that some cross border migrants are denied access to healthcare despite the existence of legislation that allows them certain rights to public healthcare in South Africa and it is against this backdrop that this research is premised. The research focused on understanding the dynamics of the interaction between frontline healthcare personnel and migrant patients at an inner city public health facility in Johannesburg and used the concepts of street level bureaucracy, access to healthcare and interface analysis in guiding the research and conceptualising the data. Participant and non participant observation, interviews, focus group discussions and conversations were employed to gain insight into the nature of interaction between frontline staff and cross border migrants. The findings suggest that documents are not a requisite for cross border migrants to access healthcare and the decisions made by frontline healthcare personnel are influenced by working conditions, frustrations, attitudes of staff and language and cultural differences between the frontline staff and cross border migrants. The study concluded that while the different behaviour patterns of the frontline staff impact on the degree of fit between cross border migrants and the public health system outright denial of access to healthcare for cross border migrants by frontline staff is not common.