Background While antenatal screening for HIV and syphilis are part of the national policy in Brazil, screening and treatment coverage remain inadequate in many parts of the country. The goal of this study was to describe missed opportunities of mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) from the point of view of pregnant women, health professionals and health care managers.

Methods A semi-structured interview was conducted in six Brazilian States. Pregnant women, health professionals and unit managers were interviewed focusing on identifying failures in the process of pregnant women care and MTCT of syphilis or HIV. The project’s approach was quantitative, but open-ended questions were included to capture the views of participants regarding feasibility of strategies being adopted for controlling MTCT.

Results A total of 109 women, 62 health professionals and 34 health care managers participated in the study. The median age of women was 24 (range 15–46) years old and the median age of schooling was 8 years. Eighty-percent of those interviewed were enrolled in prenatal care. Among those who attend antenatal visits the median was 6.4 (range 1–20) visits. Managers and health professionals had a median of 10 (range 4–25) years of working. Less than 50% of Health professionals and managers had been in HIV and syphilis MTCT, 79% reported that they needed to receive more training. In the interviews the managers said they had provided tests and treatment for these infections, but health professionals said they did not had available tests or treatment to offer to and the women complained about the difficulties to receive treatment. Women complained they were not prepared to talk about the diagnosed infections with their partner.

Conclusion It is a challenge to organize the logistics and breaking down barriers to care in Brazil. Health care system and policy factors can help to eliminate MTCT when they are part of the national policy in Brazil, screening and treatment coverage remain inadequate in many parts of the country. The goal of this study was to describe missed opportunities of mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) from the point of view of pregnant women, health professionals and health care managers.

Disclosure No significant relationships.