



RCS Library

Finding grey literature - literature search web page

What is grey literature?

Grey literature is any information that is not produced by commercial publishers. It includes research reports, working papers, conference proceedings, theses, preprints and white papers.

What are the challenges when searching for grey literature?

There is no one database for grey literature, e.g. no equivalent to MEDLINE/EMBASE. Grey literature databases often have fewer bibliographic fields to search in than published literature databases and often lack advanced search functionality.

How to find grey literature

Grey Matters is a useful list of websites which index health related grey literature, produced by the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health (CADTH):

<https://www.cadth.ca/resources/finding-evidence/grey-matters>

System for Information on Grey Literature in Europe provides open access to 700,000 bibliographical references of grey literature. It includes technical or research reports, doctoral dissertations, some conference papers, some official publications, and other types of grey literature:

<http://www.opengrey.eu/>

A bimonthly publication of The New York Academy of Medicine alerts readers to new grey literature publications in health services research: <http://greylit.org/>

ClinicalTrials.gov is a registry and results database of publicly and privately supported clinical studies of human participants conducted around the world. Currently lists 224,838 studies with locations in 50 US states and in 192 countries: <https://clinicaltrials.gov/>

Google Scholar is free to use, includes articles, theses, books, abstracts from academic publishers, professional societies, online repositories and universities: <https://scholar.google.co.uk/>

HMIC (Health Management Information Consortium) incorporates content from the UK Department of Health and the King's Fund Information and Library Service from early 1980s to the present (174,000+ records). It covers health management and policy and includes official publications, pamphlets and government reports.

Other useful databases include:

- CINAHL Plus (nursing and allied health)
- Global Health (international public health)
- HISA (public health)
- PsycEXTRA (psychiatry, psychology, mental health)
- Social Policy & Practice (Social Policy)
- TRIP Database (clinical medicine)

Which websites to search will be determined by the review topic and type:

- Pharmaceutical companies (for company trials registries)
- Medical device manufacturers (for regulatory documentation)
- Medicines regulatory bodies e.g. US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and European Medicines Agency (EMA) (for regulatory documentation)
- Professional societies (for professional guidelines, reports)
- National health departments of UK and other countries (for government guidelines, reports)
- Charities and think tanks, e.g. The Kings Fund, Nuffield Trust, The Health Foundation (for reports)