

What is gray literature and how to search for it

Gri literatür nedir ve nasıl aranır

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ABSTRACT

The term gray literature refers to printed and/or electronic research that has either been published or remains unpublished, in non-commercial form. Many systematic reviews and meta-analysis do not include gray literature sources and studies published in languages other than English. Their inclusion increases accuracy and can reduce systematic errors. It is very important to include gray literature in the screening of sources while conducting scientific studies, in order to obtain evidence-based results. The Acta Medica Alanya journal includes gray literature, in particular in its compilation and editorial writings, and supports citing articles from our country, including those written in Turkish, in its research articles.

Keywords: Gray literature, review, research

ÖZ

Gri literatür terimi, yayınlanmamış ya da ticari olmayan basılı ve/veya elektronik araştırmaları ifade eder. Birçok sistematik derleme ve metaanalizi, gri literatür kaynaklarını ve İngilizce dışındaki dillerde yayınlanan çalışmalarını içermez. Bunların dahil edilmesi kesinliği artırır ve sistematik hataları azaltabilir. Gri literatürün bilimsel çalışmalar yaparken kaynaklar arasında taramaya katılması, kanıt dayalı sonuçlar elde etmek açısından çok önemlidir. Acta Medica Alanya dergisi özellikle derleme ve editöryal yazılarında gri literatüre yer vermekte ve araştırma yazılarında Türkçe dahil ülkemiz kaynaklı makalelere atıfta bulunmayı desteklemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gri literatür, derleme, araştırma

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The term gray literature refers to printed or electronic research that has either been published or remains unpublished, in non-commercial form [1]. This literature includes documents such as this paper, dissertations, committee statements, government policy reports, conference papers, ongoing academic research and non-English research results. [1-4].

While systematic reviews are important tools for analyzing and disseminating evidence, they offer good guidance for clinical decision-making [5], but many of these, as well as meta-analysis, do not include gray literature sources and studies published in languages other than English. Their inclusion increases accuracy and can reduce systematic errors [2,6,7] and gray literature is a rich source of evidence for thorough systematic

reviews and meta-analysis [7]. It has been shown that 26 to 41% of the evidence found in some systematic reviews exists in gray literature, and that publications such as conference summaries and papers can increase citation rates by approximately 10% [8]; the mere fact that 10% of the sources in Cochrane reviews consist of meeting presentations, supports the fact that gray literature may be crucial for evidence-based medicine [9]. No doubt, gray literature actually contains more studies that can be considered insignificant, have no significant differences between groups, or contain negative results and are considered difficult to publish [8], and studies with significant differences in their results tend to be published in journals with a globally available and relatively higher impact factor in English. For all these reasons, it is very important to include gray literature in the screening among the sources while conducting scientific studies, in order to obtain complete and thorough evidence-based results [1].

Meanwhile, there are some disadvantages with regard to the use of gray literature. An example of this would be “think tanks” that publish readily available reports, but that are likely to have bias reflecting their political or social views [3]. It is also possible that there may be discrepancies between titles, indexing information and summaries in the gray literature [10]. Additionally, even though access to most of this literature is free of charge and large libraries usually collect a great deal of writings – which can be accessed in a virtual environment with a simple search engine [3] – there is, however, no standard method for a detailed gray literature review and very few specific guidelines are available. Therefore, even though sorting through gray literature can sometimes be challenging [2,8,11], conference papers have been included in supplements of several journals and library catalogs in recent years, and sites that index and collect gray literature, such as the Bielefeld Academic Search Engine (BASE), NGO Search and Open Gray, are also increasing in number [3].

The Acta Medica Alanya journal endeavors to include gray literature, in particular in its compilation and editorial writings. It supports citing articles from our country of “Türkiye”, including

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