

## Systematic Review Fact Sheet

### Searching grey literature

This fact sheet is one of a series available that discusses systematic reviews, methodology, searching and sources. For research assistance contact the [Flinders University Library](#)

#### What is grey literature?

Grey literature can be defined as:

"Information produced on all levels of government, academia, business and industry in electronic and print formats not controlled by commercial publishing i.e. where publishing is not the primary activity of the producing body."

(ICGL Luxembourg definition, 1997 - Expanded in New York, 2004).

Grey literature can include:

- Technical or research reports from government agencies
- Reports from scientific research groups
- Working papers from research groups or committees
- Dissertations and theses
- Unpublished or ongoing studies
- Clinical trial registries
- Clinical practice guidelines not published in journals
- Conference and meeting proceedings/abstracts
- Informal communications with experts
- Reports identified via Google searching

#### Systematic frameworks for searching the grey literature

The [Grey Matters online checklist tool](#) produced by The Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health (CADTH) is excellent when searching for drug evidence.

[Health Technology Assessment on the Net: 2015](#), produced by the Institute of Health Economics (Canada), complements the CADTH checklist.

#### Key grey literature sources

##### Australian grey literature sources

[Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(AIHW\)](#)

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Provides reliable, regular information and statistics on Australia's health and welfare ranging from expenditure, hospitals, disease and injury, mental health, ageing, homelessness, disability and child protection. The AIHW produces authoritative and interesting reports, and other information products, on key health and welfare issues in Australia. One of our primary roles is to collect, analyse and report information drawn from health services, community services and housing assistance services.

#### [Analysis & Policy Observatory: APO](#)

A partnership of the Australian National Institute for Public Policy and the Swinburne Institute for Social Research

#### [Trove](#)

An aggregator of content from libraries, museums, archives and other research organisations. Includes digital resources relating to Australia including newspapers, books, photos, maps, diaries, letters, etc.

#### **International grey literature sources**

##### [Eldis](#)

Covers international development policy, practice, research, primary health care & the environment. Includes over 40,000 summaries and provides free links to full-text research and policy documents from over 8,000 publishers. Each document is selected an editorial team.

##### [CORE](#)

CORE provides searchable access to millions of research papers from repositories and Open Access journals worldwide. Useful for locating theses and dissertations. Best viewed in Firefox or Chrome browsers

##### [NZResearch.org](#)

New Zealand's most comprehensive selection of research papers and related resources. This site include peer-reviewed and other research from universities, polytechnics, and research organisations throughout New Zealand.

##### [Grey Literature Report](#)

A bimonthly publication of The New York Academy of Medicine (NYAM) alerting readers to new grey literature publications in health services research and selected public health topics.

##### [National Technical Reports Library \(NTRL\)](#)

NTRL provides free access to US federally funded bibliographic science and technology research information. Produced by the (US) National Technical Information Service (Dept. of Commerce).

##### [Mednar](#)

Mednar is a free, medically-focused deep web search engine which searches authoritative public and deep web resources.

##### [OAlster database \(Worldcat\)](#)

More than 30 million records representing open access digital resources worldwide.

##### [OpenDOAR](#)

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An authoritative directory of academic open access repositories. OpenDOAR lets you search for repositories or search repository contents.

### [OpenGrey](#)

Open access to 700.000 bibliographical references of grey literature produced in Europe. OpenGrey covers Science, Technology, Biomedical Science, Economics, Social Science and Humanities.

### [WorldCat \(advanced search\)](#)

WorldCat is a US-based, international network of libraries and services. Limit results of a search by selecting Dissertation/Thesis in the content box. Very occasionally there will be a link to an online abstract or copy of the thesis.

## **Clinical trials and guidelines**

### **Clinical trial registries**

Searching clinical trial registries can be quite challenging. Usually very simple search strategies work best. This article looks at the usefulness of trial registries for SRs and optimal strategies for ensuring you don't miss key studies.

Glanville J, Duffy S, Mccool R & Varley D. [Searching ClinicalTrials.gov and the International Clinical Trials Registry Platform to inform systematic reviews: What are the optimal search approaches?](#) Journal Of The Medical Library Association. 2014 Jul; 102(3): 177–183.

### [Australian New Zealand Clinical Trials Register - ANZCTR](#)

The Australian New Zealand Clinical Trials Registry (ANZCTR) is an online register of clinical trials being undertaken in Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere. The ANZCTR includes trials from the full spectrum of therapeutic areas of pharmaceuticals, surgical procedures, preventive measures, lifestyle, devices, treatment and rehabilitation strategies and complementary therapies.

### [ClinicalTrials.gov](#)

An international registry and results database of publicly and privately supported clinical studies of human participants.

### [International Clinical Trials Registry Platform \(ICTRP\) Search Portal](#)

The ICTRP Search Portal aims to provide a single point of access to information about ongoing and completed clinical trials. It provides a searchable database containing the trial registration data sets made available by data providers around the world meeting criteria for content and quality control.

### **Clinical practice guidelines**

#### [Clinical Practice Guidelines Portal \(Australia\)](#)

The NHMRC's Clinical Practice Guidelines Portal has been developed to ensure Australian clinicians and policy-makers access high quality, evidence-based clinical practice guidelines via a single entry point.

#### [National Guidelines Clearinghouse](#)

International evidence-based clinical practice guidelines compiled by the US Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. The NGC mission is to provide health professionals, health care providers and others with a comprehensive searchable collection of evidence-based clinical practice guidelines and

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related documents to further their dissemination, implementation and use. The database has international coverage. Guideline evidence varies from expert opinion to high levels of evidence.

### [Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network \(SIGN\)](#)

The Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN) develops evidence based clinical practice guidelines for the National Health Service (NHS) in Scotland. SIGN guidelines are derived from a systematic review of the scientific literature and are designed as a vehicle for accelerating the translation of new knowledge into action to meet our aim of reducing variations in practice and improving patient-important outcomes.

### [National Institute for Health and Care Excellence \(NICE\)](#)

NICE guidelines make evidence-based recommendations on a wide range of topics, from preventing and managing specific conditions, improving health and managing medicines in different settings, to providing social care to adults and children, and planning broader services and interventions to improve the health of communities. These aim to promote integrated care where appropriate, for example, by covering transitions between children's and adult services and between health and social care.

## **Theses**

### **Australian theses**

Watch: [How to search for both Flinders and non-Flinders University theses and dissertations.](#)

[Search all Australian theses](#)

[Search all digital Australian theses](#)

International theses

[ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global](#)

A collection of dissertations and theses from around the world, spanning from 1743 to the present day and offering full text for graduate works added since 1997, along with selected full text for works written prior to 1997.

[NZResearch.org](#)

New Zealand's most comprehensive selection of research papers and related resources. This site include peer-reviewed and other research from universities, polytechnics, and research organisations throughout New Zealand.

[Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations](#)

[Theses Canada](#)

The portal for Canadian theses and includes free access to electronic theses where available (especially between 1998-2002.)

[WorldCat \(advanced search\)](#)

WorldCat is a US-based, international network of libraries and services. Limit results of a search by selecting Dissertation/Thesis in the content box. Very occasionally there will be a link to an online abstract or copy of the thesis.

[British Library's Electronic Thesis Online Service](#)

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Occasionally these theses are freely available to download; you have to register to do this. This is a huge repository of theses, but it is very expensive to source the full text.

### [National Library of Medicine](#)

Selectively lists modern dissertations which emphasise significant primary research and includes some from countries that produce little biomedical literature. Include "thesis" as a search term and limit to "manuscripts" [material type.]

## Googling for grey literature

To effectively search the web using Google for grey literature of academic quality, use the [Google Advanced Search](#) option. Google searching is rudimentary at best so you can only use a few of your search terms at a time.

### Using the Advanced Search form:

- Enter one search term only from each of your concepts in the 'All these words' search box. These terms should be the most important and precise ones from your search strategy. Google will combine these terms with AND.
- Include any important synonyms for these terms in the 'Any of these words' box. These terms will be combined with OR.
- In the 'Narrow your results' section, choose 'English' for language and PDF for file type. Most high quality grey literature is made available online as PDF documents.
- Consider restricting to a site or domain. Useful ones include .edu or .ac for academic institutions, .org for organisations, and .gov for government sites. Use this approach with caution as domain names vary by country and you can only search one domain name at a time.

Visit [Google Search Tips](#) for more information

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