

Evaluating some key features of systematic reviews on PubMed with Sri Lankan affiliations from 2013 to 2022

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Systematic reviews help answer a particular research question with evidence produced and published on a particular topic. The objective of this study was to facilitate the systematic reviewers in the medical discipline, hence the authors attempted to investigate four (04) characteristics of systematic reviews published by Sri Lankan researchers in PubMed; namely, 1) the extent and variety of databases used, 2) the extent and variety of gray literature sources being used, 3) national and international collaborations, and 4) how far the librarians or information professionals supported such systematic reviews undertaken by authors with Sri Lankan affiliations. A total number of 234 systematic reviews published in PubMed from 2013 to 2022 were extracted, and a double-blind review was conducted. PubMed/Medline (n=222, 95%) was the leading platform that Sri Lankan researchers have used to extract data for systematic reviews, followed by EMBASE (n= 91, 39%), SCOPUS (n= 83, 35%), Cochrane (n=80, 34%), Web of Science (n=74, 32%), and CINAHL (n= 68, 29%), since authors used multiple sources. It was found that only 10% of the systematic reviews (n= 24) consulted with gray literature. Amongst gray literature sources, institutional reports (n=8, 50%), Open Gray (n=4,25%), and personal collections (n=3,19%) were prominent sources. Furthermore, researchers from state universities have contributed 97% (n= 228) to the systematic reviews. University of Colombo (n=77, 33%), University of Peradeniya (n=47, 20%), and University of Rajarata (n=3, 10%) were the leading state universities. Research teams consisting of Sri Lankan researchers affiliated to institutions other than state universities have contributed 9% (n= 21) to the systematic reviews. Of the total systematic reviews, 30% (n=70) were published by research teams composed only of Sri Lankan authors while 70% (n=164) were published with foreign collaborations. Australia (n=98, 26%), the UK (n= 67, 18%), India (n=28, 7%) and the USA (n= 22, 6%) were the leading collaborated countries. Only 10% (n= 23) of systematic reviews was supported by librarians or information professionals. To facilitate Sri Lankan researchers conducting systematic reviews, the need for subscriptions to a few essential databases would be recommended. It was identified that Sri Lankan authors had opportunities to have collaborated more with certain countries whereas their local collaboration was low. Since the use of grey literature was low, the librarians can promote the use of grey literature sources.

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