DEFINITIONS of ARTICLE TYPES in GLOBAL HEALTH RESEARCH

PRIMARY, or EMPIRICAL, RESEARCH ARTICLES: In scientific and health literature, primary research articles are articles reporting original research results. These articles are most often published in peer-reviewed journals. They typically include: an abstract, introduction/background, methods, results, conclusion, and a list of references. Often these are filtered by the document type > Articles in databases.

REVIEW ARTICLES: Review articles are also most often published in peer-reviewed journals. Review articles synthesize and summarize a particular topic or area of research. They typically do not provide original research results, but provide excellent background information on the state of the research on a particular topic. Often these are filtered by the document type > Review in databases.

SYSTEMATIC REVIEWS & META-ANALYSES: Systematic reviews are a very specific type of literature review that provide comprehensive, high-level analyses and summaries of all existing literature surrounding a specific research question. These are not always tagged, but usually systematic review and/or meta-analyses appears in the article title. Example: “Sugar-sweetened beverages, vascular risk factors and events: a systematic literature review.” You can also use the Pubmed Clinical Queries search to discover systematic reviews. A meta-analysis (often a component of the systematic review methodology) is a statistical analysis that combines findings from independent studies and clinical trials.

GREY LITERATURE / GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS: Grey literature is information produced by government agencies, think tanks, academics, business and industry in print and online formats, but not controlled by commercial publishers. Material types may include: technical reports, pre-prints, conference proceedings, bibliographies, workshop summaries, government documents, policy briefs, and dissertations. Many of these materials are ephemeral and accessible for free online via the agency website that produces the reports (ex. NGO, WHO, US Gov’t). Grey literature is an important source to consider for global health research. More info here (NY Academy of Medicine)

NEWS: Written by journalists for public audiences, news articles provide vital background information and current reporting on many global health topics. News is distributed in printed newspapers and magazines, as well as online through news media websites, blogs, social media, and radio/TV broadcasts. In global health research, news sources might also serve as primary sources for understanding how health topics are disseminated to the public via local newspapers or informal publications.