Shrewsbury and Telford
Health Libraries

Searching Healthcare Databases

NICE Healthcare Databases
Advanced Search

**How to search for references to journal articles using
NICE Healthcare Databases Advanced Search**

http://beta-hdas.nice.org.uk/

This guide covers the healthcare databases available to NHS staff and students via NICE. An NHS OpenAthens account is required to access the databases.

Step 1   Plan your search

Planning your search will help you to be precise about exactly what it is you need to know and will help to produce a structured search.

The most important principle in planning your search is to break it down into its different elements, search for each individually, then combine them.

If you are searching for a clinical topic, the following framework (**PICO**) may help you to formulate a clinical question that you can use in your search. The example below shows how it can be used for therapeutic interventions.

Example*: In general practice, should adults with acute cough be routinely prescribed antibiotics?*

Patient or **P**roblem	**I**ntervention	**C**omparison	**O**utcome
common cold adults	antibiotics	vitamin C	reduction in duration clinical improvements lack of side effects

You may also need to think about other important information such as how far back you wish to search and the sort of documents you want (e.g. clinical trials or systematic reviews).

Step 2   Select the most appropriate database for your search

Here is a brief guide to the content of each of the databases:

Medline
Medline is a vast source of medical information, covering all aspects of medicine, including dentistry, veterinary medicine and medical psychology.

CINAHL (Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature)
Nearly all English language nursing journals, as well as journals from 17 allied health disciplines.

AMED (Allied and Complementary Medicine)
This covers alternatives to conventional medicine (acupuncture, Chinese medicine, herbalism, homeopathy, hypnosis, etc), and fields allied to medicine (physiotherapy, rehabilitation, occupational therapy, podiatry, palliative care, speech and language therapy). This is a relatively small database and if you are searching for a specialised topic you may get better results from CINAHL, Medline or PsycInfo.

BNI (British Nursing Index)
This covers popular UK nursing, midwifery, and community healthcare material. This is a relatively small database and for specialised topics, you may get better results in CINAHL.

EMBASE
This covers all aspects of biomedicine, drugs and pharmacology, with a European, rather than an American emphasis. It also covers public, occupational and environmental health, pollution, substance dependence and abuse, forensic medicine, and alternatives to animal testing.

Health Business Elite

Health Business Elite contains full text content from 480 journals, detailing all aspects of health care administration and other non-clinical aspects of health care institution management

HMIC

Health Management Information Consortium. includes planning - financial, building and equipment, public health, health inequalities, partnership working and workforce development.

PsycINFO

Covers psychology and psychological aspects of medicine, psychiatry, nursing, speech and language therapy, pharmacology, physiology, linguistics, anthropology, business and law.

Step 3   Getting started

1.   Visit **http://beta-hdas.nice.org.uk/**

2.   Enter your NHS OpenAthens account details to log in

3.   Click on the name of the database you with to search first
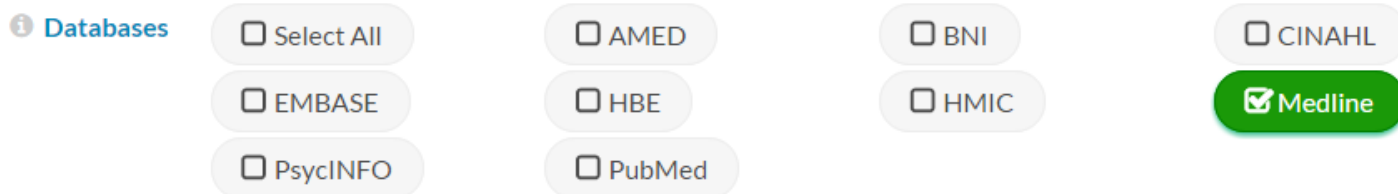
It is possible to do a a simple search without logging in, but this will only cover PubMed, and won't give you links to the full-text of articles.

We recommend choosing one database at a time - if you select more than one, you won't have options for applying filters or using thesaurus terms.

Step 4   Performing a search

- **Searching using the Thesaurus (recommended)**
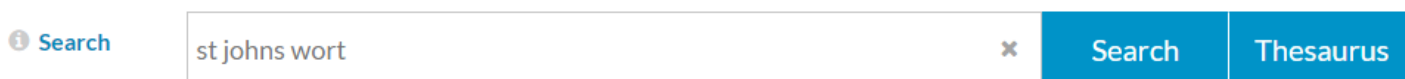
Note that not all databases offer thesaurus searching, and it isn't possible when searching more than one database at a time.

Break the search into separate concepts

If your search consists of two or more distinct concepts (e.g. is St. John's Wort effective in reducing depression as compared to fluoxetine?) you need to search for each concept separately and combine then together at the end.
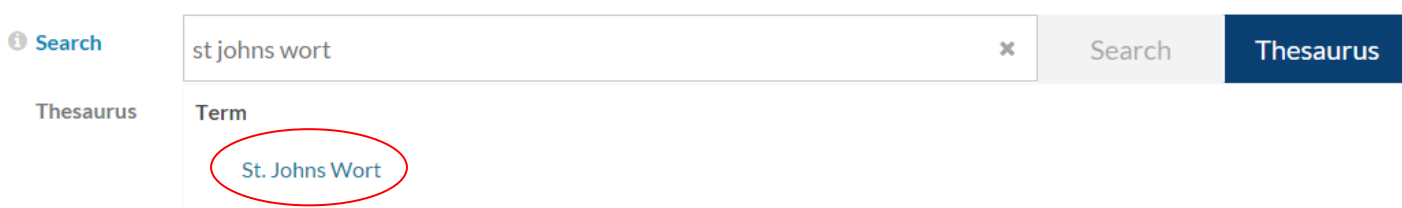
Enter a search term

Enter a term e.g. 'st johns wort', and click on thesaurus (remove any punctuation from your search term first).

You then should see a list of possible thesaurus terms to use. Click the one you want to use.

Once you've clicked a term, you'll then be able to decide how to search it. The screen shows the thesaurus terms used in the database you're searching for your given search terms along with broader terms and some further tickboxes.

Select Checkbox

Select the most appropriate thesaurus term by clicking in the box to the left-hand side of the term. You can select a broader term as well if you wish.

Explode Checkbox

The thesaurus terms are arranged in hierarchical trees. 'Exploding' a search means that you also search for any narrower terms that appear under your term in its tree. For example, if you do a search for 'Depressive disorder' in Medline, topics such as 'Depression, Postpartum' and 'Seasonal Affective Disorder' are narrower topics, and by ticking 'Explode' for 'Depressive Disorder' all of these topics are covered in your search.

Thesaurus	Select	Explode	Major	Term	Broad	Narrow	Sibling	Related	Used For	Subheadings	Notes
	☐	☐	☐	Mood Disorders						Subheadings	Scope
	☑	☑	☑	Depressive Disorder	1	6			7	Subheadings	Scope
	☐	☐	☐	Depression, Postpartum						Subheadings	Scope
	☐	☐	☐	Depressive Disorder, Major						Subheadings	Scope
	☐	☐	☐	Depressive Disorder, Treatment-Resistant						Subheadings	Scope
	☐	☐	☐	Dysthymic						Subheadings	Scope

From this screen it is possible to further refine your search should you wish by clicking in the checkboxes for more appropriate thesaurus terms.

In most cases, it is worth using 'Explode' for any terms that are relevant.

Major Checkbox

This allows you to restrict your search to those articles where the topic you have chosen is a major topic of the article. This should limit your search to more relevant articles, but may in the process remove some articles of interest, so use carefully.

Subheadings

Depending on the database chosen, these allow you to restrict your search to certain aspects of a single subject such as 'pathology' or 'adverse effects'. The subheadings are taken from a restricted list so none of them may be appropriate. They should be treated with caution - it is better not to use them unless a subheading directly matches your requirements.

Thesaurus	Select	Explode	Major	Term	Broad	Narrow	Sibling	Related	Used For	Subheadings	Notes
	☐	☐	☐	Mood Disorders						Subheadings	Scope
	☑	☑	☑	Depressive Disorder	1	6			7	33	Scope

bl blood   cf cerebrospinal fluid   ci chemically induced   cl classification

co complications   dh diet therapy   di diagnosis   **dt drug therapy**   ec economics

eh ethnology   en enzymology   ep epidemiology   et etiology   ge genetics

hi history   im immunology   me metabolism   mi microbiology   mo mortality

nu nursing   pa pathology   pc prevention & control   pp physiopathology

ps parasitology   px psychology   ra radiography   rh rehabilitation

ri radionuclide imaging   **su surgery**   **th therapy**   ur urine   us ultrasonography

vi virology

Continuing your search

Once you have selected all your options, click on 'Search Now' to continue. You will then be taken back to the main search screen.

exp *"DEPRESSIVE DISORDER"/dt,th,su

⊙ Or ○ And   **Search Now**   **Search as individual Queries**

Current Strategy: [Name this strategy]   Save Strategy

Rerun Searches   Copy ↱   ⊙ And   ○ Or   Combine   Delete Selected   **Export Options**

☐ All	Database(s)	Search Term			
☐ 2	Medline	exp *"DEPRESSIVE DISORDER"/dt,th,su	View Results (74,722)	Edit	🗑

Combining searches

To carry on with the search and add a second concept, type in a second word or phrase and do a second search.

When you have two or more searches, they can be combined together

For example, to find articles about both depressive disorders and fluoxetine, select the two searches, and click on 'Combine'. By default, searches are combined with 'And', but you can use 'Or' instead.

You should end up with something like:

Results will appear below the Current Strategy box.

- **Searching using free-text terms (not recommended unless a suitable thesaurus term is not available)**

Free-text searching bypasses the thesaurus terms and allows you to search for word or phrases that appear in the title or abstract of the item. It is not as accurate as using thesaurus mapping, but may be useful if a suitable thesaurus term is unavailable.

Type a word or phrase in the search box (phrase can be placed in double-quotes if necessary). Click 'Search'.

The search will be carried out, and the number of results displayed in the Current Strategy.

To see the results if they're not already displayed, click on 'View Results'.

Free-text searches can be combined with other searches as with thesaurus searching.

Truncation

When using free-text searching, you can use the truncation symbol (*) to broaden your search to variations of a term. For example, 'depress*' will find depressed, depression, depressive etc.

Step 5   Using the search limits

You may wish to limit your search in various ways, such as to documents in English only, or only documents that relate to children only.

You can apply limits before you search by ticking the 'Limits' box on the search screen and then selecting from the limits available (these will differ according to which database(s) you're using).

For example, in Medline under Age Group, you can select one of more age groups to cover in your search.

If you've already carried out a search and want to use limits, click the 'Edit' link on the results list and then click 'Edit Limits'

Choose the limits to apply, and click 'Update' on the search screen.

Step 6   Displaying the results

Normally, the results of the last search will be displayed below the Current Strategy box. If not, click on 'View Results'

Initially, a brief title entry will be displayed for each reference, with links to the abstract and/or full-text (if available). 25 references per page are displayed.

To show all available abstracts, click the 'Show Abstracts' link at the top of the list.

To change the sort order, click the dropdown box at the top of the list.

Viewing Full-text Articles

To view a full-text document (where available), click on the link to full text from the titles display. The link will take you to the site that carries the full-text (e.g. EBSCO, BMJ Journals). You may need to login again (make sure you click on 'login with Athens if appropriate), or click on the relevant article, depending on the site. Note that some items may be very short if they are letters or comments.

The options for printing, saving or emailing full-text articles differ according to which site holds the electronic journal.

Step 7   Printing, saving or e-mailing results

If you wish to select references for printing or saving, click in the checkbox to the left of that reference.

At the end of each page, remember to click 'Save Selected' or 'Add to Saved' (if you move to the next page of results without saving your selected references, the selections will be lost.

Your selected references will be added to a new set ('Saved Results') that is displayed under the Current Strategy.

You can use the 'Export Options' to save or print your selected references.

Click the preferred filetype to save the references to a file.

There is currently no option to directly email selected references to yourself.

As of June 2016, full-text links do not appear in exports.

Step 8   Saving Searches

You can save search strategies by giving your search a name in the 'name this strategy' box.

To re-run a previously saved search strategy, click the 'My Strategies' link at the top of the page.

Step 9   Changing Database and Re-running Searches

To change database, simply click the database name on the search screen (and untick the current one).

To re-run a search you've already carried out in another database, click 'Edit' next to the search you wish to run and select a new database.

If you change databases and have used the thesaurus mapping facility in your original search, it is better to start your search again from scratch in the second database. This is because each database uses slightly different thesaurus terms so if you re-run your exact search, you may not find any results, or miss useful material.

If the new database does not recognise the search (e.g. if the limits applied do not work in the new database) you may get a syntax error.

Getting further help and training

We're here to help you make effective use of the knowledge base of healthcare, and to do this we provide help and assistance in using databases for literature searching.

We can provide individual training and support by phone or email, in the library, or at your place of work. Visit us on our website **library.sath.nhs.uk** for more information.