Searching Healthcare Databases via Ovid

About healthcare databases available via Ovid

You have access to a range of bibliographic databases for searching the journal literature, and many of these are available via the Ovid interface, including:

- AMED (Allied and Complementary Medicine)
- EMBASE (Drugs and pharmacology, other aspects of human medicine)
- EMCARE (Nursing and allied health)
- HMIC (Health Management Information Consortium)
- Medline (General medical database)
- Social Policy and Practice

All of these are available to search by all NHS staff and students, and require an NHS OpenAthens account to login.

Other databases are available, and more details can be found on our Outline of Healthcare Databases guide, or on our website.

Getting onto the databases

Visit the library website at www.library.sath.nhs.uk and click on the Search link at the top, and select 'Articles'. Scroll down to the 'Advanced searching for articles' section and follow the links to your chosen database under the Ovid EBSCO Interface.

Alternatively, select your chosen database from the A-Z of Knowledge Resources at the bottom of the page.

Enter your NHS OpenAthens account details and this will then take you to the advanced search screen.

Starting your search

On the search screen, enter your search terms the search box.

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?) it is best to search for each concept separately, and then combine the searches at the end.

By default, the 'Map Term to Subject Headings' box is ticked (for those databases that have a thesaurus), and this will allow you to check for any relevant thesaurus terms. To use the subject headings, you need to use one term at a time.

Click 'Search' to begin your search.

If there is a suitable subject heading available, this may already be selected. If there are several possible subject headings, you may need to select one or more of them.

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.

If the 'Explode' checkbox is available, you can click the subject heading itself to see what the narrower or broader terms are.

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

Major Concept 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.

Search as Keyword

Even if a suitable subject heading was found, you may wish to search for your term as a keyword (free-text searching). To do this, simply tick the box next to '*search as Keyword*' in addition to any chosen subject heading(s).

Subheadings

If you are searching using a single subject term (and have not selected the *search as keyword box*), when you click 'Continue' you will be presented with the option to select one or more subheadings (for example, 'adverse effects' or 'diet therapy').

The subheadings are taken from a restricted list, and differ depending on the topic, 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.
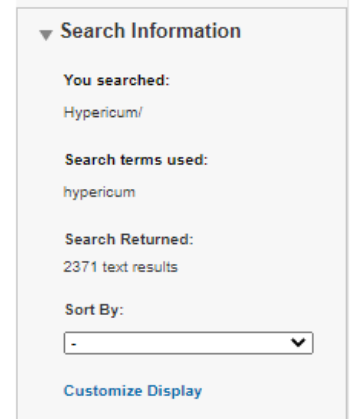

Each subheading shows the number of references that it would retrieve.

If you don't want to use subheadings, you can either leave them all blank, or click on 'Include all subheadings'.

Click 'Continue' when ready.

This will then run the search for you, and show you the first 10 references below. A box on the left shows how many references there are in total.

A search using the advanced search screen will search for the words or phrase that appear in the title, abstract and subject headings of references, but you can search specific fields if you wish.
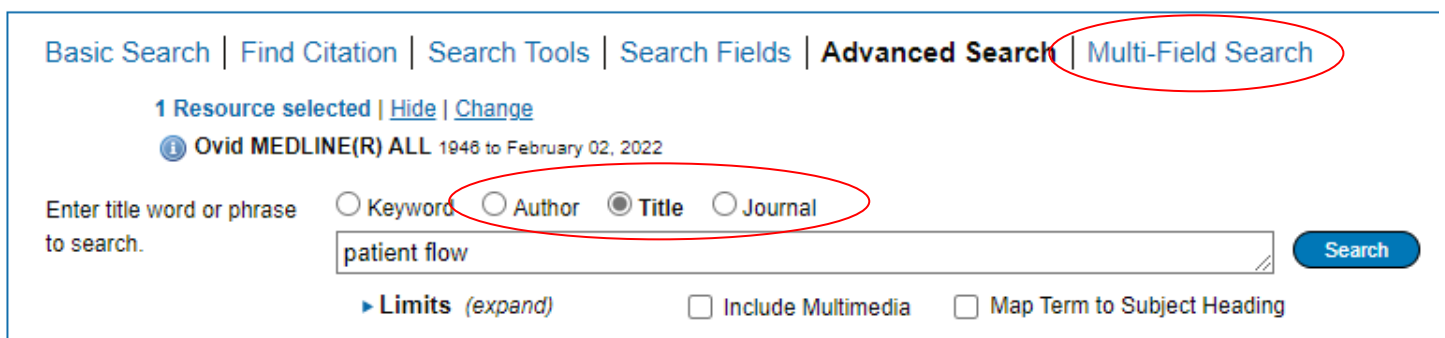
Searching without using the subject headings (free-text searching)

You may wish to bypass the subject headings and simply search for words or a phrase. To do this, you can untick the 'Map Term to Subject Headings' box.

Searching in specific fields

You can use the options above the search box to search for an author, title, or journal name only.

You can also click on 'Multi-Field Search' to see all other available fields you can search in the database you are using.

Phrase searching

Unlike most other database interfaces, Ovid treats all search terms as phrases. For example, if you type *patient flow*, Ovid will search for items that have those words next to each other and in that order.

If you want to search for both words, but not necessarily next to each other, you could use the Boolean 'and', for example *patient and flow* or you could use a proximity operator (see below)

Words near each other (proximity searching)

When searching by keyword, by default terms are treated as a phrase.

You can specify if you'd like words to be near each other by using the ADJ operator follows by the number of words within, for example ADJ3 for within three words (note: ADJ does not need to be in capitals).

For example, emergency ADJ5 care would find phrases such as 'care in the emergency department', 'emergency care', 'emergency medical care' and so on. The words can be in any order.

Truncation

When using free-text searching, you can use the truncation symbol (* or $) to broaden your search to variations of a term. For example, 'school*' will find school, schooling, schooled etc.

Combining searches

You can do separate searches and combine them together at any stage, and you can combine searches using subject headings, and searches using free-text.

To see your search history and combine searches, click the 'Search History' link at the top of the page.

Select the searches you wish to combine, and then click 'AND' or 'OR' as appropriate.

The search history shows the last four searches – to see more, click the 'Expand' link on the right-hand side.

Grouping search terms

You can also group search terms and use Boolean operators in the search box. For example, you could search:

This would search for articles that contain any word in the first group AND any word in the second group, so could include 'urgent care', 'emergency medical care', 'department of emergency medicine' etc.

It is not essential to use capital letters for Boolean operators.

When using Boolean operators in the search box, you will not be offered suggested subject terms.

Refining your search using the search filters

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

You can apply limits prior to running a search by opening up the 'Limits' menu below the search box.

Note: *When choosing a publication year limit range, you need to put dates in both boxes.*

This gives you some limits, but for more options, click 'Additional Limits' where you can access filters such as age groups or publication types.

You can also apply some limits (such as date ranges) to your current search by using the Filter box at the left.

You can also apply limits to a previous search by typing the search line number in the search box (open the search history to see your previous search lines), selecting your limits and clicking 'Search'.

Displaying the results

Normally, the results of the last search will be displayed below the search box. If you wish to see the results of a previous search, open your search history and click 'Display results'.

10 references per page are displayed in date order (latest first). To change the sort order, select one of the options under 'Sort by' in the Search Information panel to the right.

To change the number of references per page, use the dropdown at the top of the list.

To show abstracts, click the box with three lines at the top of the list for 'Abstract view'

Viewing Full-text Articles

On the right of each article is a link to 'Get Full Text'. Clicking this will open a new window (you may need to allow pop-ups) and the LibKey system will check to see if full-text is available. If it is, it should display the full-text, and if not it will provide a link to our article request form.

Printing, saving or e-mailing results

If you wish to select references for printing or saving, tick the box to the left of the reference.

To save selected references, click on 'Keep Selected' before you move to the next page of results.

You'll see your chosen references are placed in a new set.

To print, email or export references from a set, click 'Display Results' for the set of selected references.

Choose print, email or export from the top of the list.

Records can be exported directly to reference manager packages such as RefWorks, or can be downloaded as RIS files for import into other packages.

If you want to save references for the next time you login, or to combine results from multiple databases, you will need to create a personal account in Ovid.

To save references to a saved folder, click on the '+My Projects' icon. You will then be asked to login, or to create a personal account if you haven't already done so. You can create a new project or add references to one you previously created.

You can access projects from the 'My Workspace' on the top menu.

Changing database and re-running searches

To change databases in Ovid, click the 'Change' link near the database name.

Tick the database you want to use, and either click 'OK' to simply change to that database and being a new search, or click 'Run search' to attempt to run the search in the new database.

Re-running a search may not always work as different database use different subject headings, different field names and different search filters.

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 evidence searching.

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

March 2022