

Database Searching Basics

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Database Indexing Scheme

Control vocabulary

Medical Subject Headings (MeSH)

CINAHL Subject Headings

Each database has its own indexing scheme. For example, MEDLINE uses Medical Subject Headings also called MeSH to index articles. CINAHL uses MeSh as base but supplemented with additional terms related to nursing and allied health, which is called CINAHL subject headings. They are control vocabularies.

Both MeSH and CINAHL's Subject Heading List are hierarchical authority file lists. In MEDLINE it is called Tree Structure while in CINAHL it is called Tree View. Based on the subject terms, subject specialists go over each article completely and then assign terms to the record that describe as specifically as possible the content of the article.

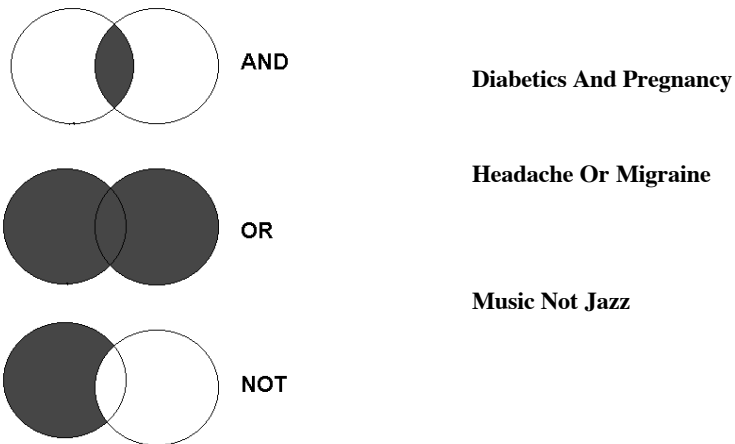
Database Searching Features

- Focus/Major Concept/Major Topic Search
- Explode Search

There are two kinds of searches in MEDLINE and CINAHL. The first type is called Focus search or Major Concept search or Major Topic search, which means it searches for those documents in which your subject heading is considered the major point of the article.

Another type of search is called Explode search, which includes MeSH terms or CINAHL subject headings found below your search term in the MeSH Tree Structure or CINAHL Tree View.

Boolean Operators



Search operators, also called Boolean operators, defines the logical relationships between search terms. The most popular Boolean operators are AND, OR, and NOT. They can be applied to most databases and internet search engines. AND is used to combine two search terms and the search only retrieves the overlap documents. In this case, a search for Diabetics and Pregnancy retrieves documents about diabetics and pregnancy. Both terms must be appeared in the documents. Therefore, AND reduces the search results.

OR is another popular search operator, which retrieves documents contain either of the search terms. In this case, the search retrieves documents containing either headache or migraine. This operator increases the search results. OR is usually used to combine synonyms or similar terms.

NOT is used to exclude or remove search terms from the search. In this case, the search retrieves documents about music but not include documents talking about jazz.

Developing a Search Strategy

I'm researching on the **culture aspect of kidney transplantation.**

Questions to ask:

- Which database?
- MeSH or CINAHL Subject Headings?
- Explode or Major Concept?
- Combine?
- Limit?

Having understood the database indexing, do you think you can type a sentence into the search box? For example, you are requested to research on the culture aspects of kidney transplantation. How do you go about searching for the articles?

The effective search always starts with developing the search strategy. In this case, the search terms are culture aspects and kidney transplantation. Then you have to asked more questions.

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