

# Using the Medline database

## Information Skills Practical Workshop

This worksheet will give you a taster of the information available to you via Medline. Literature searching from the website of any database is more powerful than searching via Primo and unless you have used either of these particular databases before you are likely to benefit from attending a workshop where we cover the database features in more detail.

**Please ask for help at any time if you need it**

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### 1. Plan your search – Medline search rules

Refer to your planning table/matrix of keywords and other information you created earlier in this session on your research topic to decide on the keyword search approach you will use in this database. Remember to apply the search rules for Medline.

Search rules for Medline:

- Boolean operators: **AND, OR, NOT**
- Exact phrase: e.g. **heart attack**
- Truncation symbol: \$ e.g. **adolescen\$** will find adolescent, adolescents, adolescence
- Wildcard symbol: # e.g. **p#ediatric** will find paediatric, pediatric

### 2. Carry out your initial search in Medline

1. Go to <https://shibboleth.ovid.com/>
2. Select your region: **UK Access Management Federation**
3. Choose your institution: **University of Aberdeen**
4. Login using your university computer username and password
5. Scroll down the list and click on **Ovid MEDLINE(R) 1946 to [current month, week, year]**

Alternatively, sign in to Primo (<https://primo.abdn.ac.uk>) and click on the **Find Databases** tab. Enter the name **Medline** into the search box, then select Medline on the results list. Primo opens the details page for Medline (OVID). In the **View Online** section, click on MEDLINE.

6. Carry out your search in the default **Advanced Ovid Search** screen. Let's try a quick search using only one of your words/phrases for each of your ideas. Don't use any truncation symbols at this point – you will use them later to see if they make a difference!
7. Type one keyword or phrase for your first concept (idea) in the search box

8. Deselect **Map Term to Subject Heading** just below the search box

9. Click on **Search**

10. You will then see a list of relevant results. How many records have been found?

Now improve your search – go back and look at the search terms you thought about on your planning sheet/matrix. Search each idea separately, each time using the same techniques.

1. Try searching for your alternative words/phrases for the first idea: search for MeSH terms (Medical Subject Headings). Make sure that you apply the truncation symbol at appropriate points. Then do the same for the other ideas you have identified.

2. To combine your different searches go to **Search History** at the top of the screen, select each term you want to combine and then select **Combine with AND**

3. Look at the results. How many records have been found?

**You will use a combination of the options presented in Section 3 (View and evaluate results) and Section 4 (Refine your results) to improve the records that you find.**

### 3. View and evaluate your results

You never get the perfect search first time and you will modify and refine your search as you go along. This involves looking at what you have found and modifying, refining and improving your search strategy.

1. **Viewing your results:** there are a number of options available to you

a) Click on **Abstract Reference** on right hand side of screen, where available

b) Click on the **Complete Reference** link for any of the papers. Skim down the information given in this display. Are there any other MeSH terms that you could use to improve your search? If there are note them down as you may want to use them at a later stage of your search.

c) Click on the **Find It** link next to a reference of interest. This opens the paper's details page in Primo. In the **View Online** section, click on the name of the provider, e.g. Springer to link through to their website and access the full-text of the article.

d) Identify a reference where there is no **Find It** link and click on the paper's title. Copy the name of the **journal** and paste it into the Primo search box, making sure you have selected the **Journal Search** tab. On the results list in Primo, click on the name of the journal. This opens the journal's details page with information about our paper holdings and online access.

- For online access (**View Online** section) check our subscription dates by different providers and select a provider. Primo will link you to their website. From there you can navigate to the required journal part and access the full-text of the article.
- To check our paper holdings for the journal in which the paper was published, check the **Get It** section in the journal's details page.

Do we have the reference that you were interested in?

2. **Displaying/sorting your results:** the default setting is the most recent item is at the top of your results list with the oldest item at the bottom. You can change this sort order to assist your evaluation of what you have found. In the left-hand options column, click on the drop-down **Sort by:** menu and select how you want to sort your list of results.

3. **Evaluating your results:** this depends on your own knowledge of the topic. Skim read the results and abstracts as appropriate. Look for: relevant words in the title and in the abstract; recognised/known authors or institutions.

Consider the references used and the number of times a paper has been cited since publication. Click on **Find Citing Articles** on the right-hand side of the screen, to find this out (does not apply if it is a recent paper!). Think about whether the journal in which the paper was published is an important one in this subject area.

#### 4. Refine your search

You never get the perfect search first time. You have to modify and refine as you go along. There are different ways in which you can do this. The following options are available and you will use a combination of these as you evaluate your results and develop your search strategy to identify relevant papers.

1. Refining by **keyword**: You can add another set of keywords – e.g. a third idea/concept. Just do another search and combine the results with your other searches.

How many records are found?

You can continue to add more ideas and combine

2. Applying limits: underneath the Advanced Search box click on the **Limits** link. Put a tick against **Review Articles** and click the **Search** button to limit your results to review articles. These can be extremely useful in the early part of a literature review.

How many records are found?

3. Click on the **Additional Limits** button. Here you will find more extensive limits for refining your search. Under **Subject Subsets** highlight one (or more) subject and then click on the **Limit A Search** button.

How many records have you found?

4. Limiting by other means: under **Additional Limits** Medline allows you to refine/limit your results by a variety of means including **Age Groups**, **Journal Subsets**, **Clinical Queries** and **Publication Types**.

Do any of these options provide you with useful results?

5. If you are having problems identifying a MeSH term, use the **Permuted Index**, which can be found in the **Search Tools** tab above the search box.

#### 5. Output your results

Almost all databases allow you to mark and output results in a variety of ways.

1. **Selecting/marking results:**

- a) you can select small numbers of individual records by clicking in the check box to the left of each record
- b) to select a greater number of references use the **All** check box in the header bar above the results or enter a range of references in the **Select Range** box in the same header bar

2. Once records have been selected click on any of the options provided in the same header bar above your results: **Print**, **Email**, **Export**, **+My Projects**

To export your references to reference management software, do the following. Click on the **Export** link. A pop-up window called **Export Citation List** will open. In **Format** select the software you want. In **Fields** select **Citation**, **Abstract**. Click the **Export** button

## 6. Advanced features

Many databases allow you to set up time saving features such as personal profiles (or accounts), saved search strategies or results lists and alerting features

To create a personal account in Ovid, follow these steps:

1. Go to <https://shibboleth.ovid.com>
2. Login and click on the **Ovid MEDLINE(R) 1946 to [current month, week, year]** entry (instructions in Section 2)
3. Click on **My Account** on the top bar of the Ovid screen
4. Click on **Create Account** and complete the required steps (note the password must be between 6 and 8 characters long – a combination of numbers and letters). Click the **Create** button
5. You've now set up your own personal account in Ovid, and can save search strategies, set up alerts and eTOCS alerts, and manage your settings.

To save a **Search Strategy**: return to the main search page and click the **Save** button next to a search (in Search History). Give the search a name and save it as a **Permanent** search.

**Top Tip**: when saving a Search Strategy, include the name of the database (e.g. Medline) in the title.

To set up an **Auto alert**: return to the main search page and click the **Save** button. Give the search a name and save it as an **AutoAlert**.

## 7. Help and advice

**Library staff and Information Consultants can help with any difficulties using any library resource**

Information Consultant contact details: <http://bit.ly/InfoConsultants>

**IT staff are able to help with specific IT related problems you may be having**

**IT Service Desk** - Log any IT problems at <https://myit.abdn.ac.uk>

Tel. 01224 273636 (24 hour service available)