

Information Management for Busy Practitioners

Resources to help you Keep Current

Darlene Chapman, MLIS¹

Previous articles in this series covered basic and advanced features of the PubMed database and introduced readers to select health-related databases including PsycINFO, Embase, Cochrane Library, CINAHL and Web of Science). The final article in this series will cover selected resources/services that may assist you in keeping up to date with the literature published in your field including e-journals, e-table of contents, automatic search updates and RSS feeds.

e-journals:

The publishing industry has undergone dramatic change in recent years. Most academic and scholarly journals are now available in electronic format. In many environments, researchers and clinicians associated with a university, can access the university's electronic library collection remotely from their office or home (or anywhere else) with a username & password. If you aren't associated with a university you can still access thousands of journals in electronic format through "open-access" resources. The Open Access journal movement has resulted in the creation of many new journals as well as the transition of many well-established journals to this format. Publishing in an open access journal may involve a fee for the author (or affiliated institution) but the published research is made freely available to everyone - there are no subscriptions fees for readers. Visit PubMed Central (www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov) Biomed Central (www.biomedcentral.com) and the Directory of Open Access Journals (www.doaj.org) for free open-access journals. The *Journal of the Canadian Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* is now an open access journal available freely through PubMed Central.

Google Scholar (GS) is a good source for linking to free electronic journals (www.google scholar.com). GS, of course, will also link to electronic journals that are available, for a fee, from commercial publishers. By entering your credit card information you can purchase a copy of almost any article from a commercial publisher. This can be costly but may be helpful if you don't have access to the article any other way or need a copy of the article urgently. The cost usually includes an article fee as well as a copyright fee and can be as much as \$40.00 US per article!

Library interlibrary loan / Document Delivery Service / Loansome Doc:

If you're associated with a university or a health facility that has a library service find out about interlibrary loan

or document delivery service. Your local library may be able to access journal articles for you from other library collections for little or no cost. If you search the PubMed database you may be able to set up a Loansome Doc account with your local library that will allow you to request copies of articles while you are searching the database (www.nlm.nih.gov/loansomedoc/loansome_home.html).

Electronic table of contents / e-TOC:

Most commercial publishers will allow you to set up free electronic table of contents service. This is a wonderful way for you to become aware of what is being published in your favorite journals. All you have to do is find the publisher for your favorite journals and sign-up for alerts. When you are at the publisher's page look for something called "electronic table of contents "e-TOC" or "e-alerts". Set up an account freely and receive an email message every time the journal is published with a list of the contents. You may not be able to access the fulltext of journal articles but you'll know the content of each issue. See section on "e-journals" above to learn how you can access the fulltext of some electronic journal articles.

Automatic Updates of Searches:

A previous article on PubMed referred to this service. PubMed, CINAHL, PsycINFO, Web Of Science and other databases provide services where you can set up automatic updates of specific search strategies. Once you've done a search in any of these databases you can save your search strategy and the database search engine will run automatic updates on a schedule of your choice (daily, weekly, bi-weekly, monthly). You can save multiple searches for automatic updates simply by giving each a different saved search title. The updated search results (bibliographic references) will be emailed to you on a regular basis. In PubMed, set up a free "My NCBI" account and use the Save Search feature to save your search strategy with an automatic update. The process for doing this will vary in other databases such as CINAHL & PsycINFO because there are different vendors with different search engines. Look for a feature called AutoAlert / SDI (Selective Dissemination of Information) / Save Search/ My Profile or Citation Alerts.



RSS Feeds:

RSS, which is sometimes referred to as "Really Simple Syndication" or "Rich Site Summary" is a way to keep current with changes to specific webpages. Not all

webpages will have an RSS feed, but those that do will be identified with the RSS symbol above or XML. You'll need a feed reader, which you can find freely on the Internet, such as Feed Reader (www.feedreader.com) or Bloglines (www.bloglines.com). The information provided is basic but will keep you abreast of updates to your favorite webpages. Each item in your feed reader update will include a title as well as a summary or sometimes the full content of the web update. You can use RSS feeds to keep up to date with medical news sites, but they can also be helpful for getting updates from other websites including publishers, databases etc.

Conclusion:

There is an ever-growing amount of information available in the health care field. Keeping current is a challenge for everyone. This article discussed a number of services / resources that can assist you to keep abreast

of literature in your field. Through "open access" and free e-journals, electronic table of contents services, database automatic search updates and RSS feeds you can manage and prevent information overload.

¹Manager, Information Services, IWK Health Centre
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Editorial Note: This is the last in a series of updates for searching health-related databases. We thank Ms. Chapman for her hard work and her useful suggestions. Next article in this section will be on reporting adverse drug reactions. If clinicians have any suggestions for upcoming "Information Management" please do not hesitate to contact the editor.