

# Information Management for Busy Practitioners

## Health-Related Databases

**Editorial Note:** Ms. Chapman has agreed to provide a series of brief, practical articles on how to effectively search the literature (PubMed, Cochrane reviews etc.) in order for clinicians to stay up to date. This will not become a regular feature of the *Journal*.

Two previous articles in this series covered basic and advanced searching of the PubMed database. This article will provide a brief overview of other, health-related databases (PsycINFO, Embase, Cochrane Library, CINAHL, Web of Science), with general information on how to access and search these databases effectively.

**PsycINFO**, an American Psychological Association database, provides coverage of the academic, research and practice literature in psychology as well as related disciplines such as medicine, psychiatry, education, social work, law, and criminology. The database indexes more than 2450 journal titles, ninety-nine per cent of which are peer reviewed and indexes some resources as far back as the 1600s! PsycINFO selectively indexes books, book chapters, technical reports and dissertations in addition to journals.

*Access to PsycINFO & effective searching:* The PsycINFO database requires a license, and can be accessed through a number of different vendors, including Ebsco, OVID, Proquest. Your institution may have a license to PsycINFO from one of these vendors or from APA directly. The search engine will be different with each vendor. Regardless of the vendor, you should consider using the *Thesaurus of Psychological Index Terms* to search the PsycINFO database more effectively. The Thesaurus, which is similar to MeSH in PubMed, standardizes words and phrases to represent concepts so that you don't need to try to figure out all the ways different authors could refer to the same concept. Consider using the Thesaurus in PsycINFO instead of searching "freetext" or simply looking for occurrences of words.

**Embase** is a biomedical and pharmacological bibliographic database which provides access to citations and abstracts from over 7,000 journals with indexing back to 1947. The content of Embase is somewhat similar to PubMed, but it indexes 1800 journals that are not indexed in PubMed. Although its coverage is world-wide, Embase has more of a European focus than PubMed and concentrates to a greater degree on the pharmacological literature.

*Access to Embase & effective searching:* Like PubMed, Embase offers you the ability to search with subject headings. Consider using the Emtree subject headings to search for concepts rather than searching freetext for keywords

Embase is subscription based so find out if your institution has a site license.

**Cochrane Library** is a collection of databases that bring together, in one place, research on the effectiveness of healthcare treatments and interventions. The collection contains high-quality independent evidence to inform healthcare decision-making. It includes evidence from Cochrane and other systematic reviews, clinical trials and more. Cochrane reviews bring the combined results of various research studies together (meta-analysis) and are recognized as the "gold standards" in the evidence hierarchy.

*Access to Cochrane Library & effective searching:* The Cochrane Library is available through Wiley Interscience. Cochrane Reviews can be searched freely through PubMed, but the fulltext of Cochrane Reviews cannot be accessed without a license. In some areas of the world licenses have been arranged at the provincial, regional and even national level. In Canada the Cochrane Library is currently available province-wide in New Brunswick, Northwest Territories, Nova Scotia, Nunavut, Saskatchewan and Yukon.

Use the basic search function in the Cochrane Library but limit your search to "Title, Abstract or Keywords", otherwise the system will search for your words in the fulltext of Cochrane reviews.

**Web of Science (WOS)** is a unique database whose primary function is to collect information for citation analysis from over 5600 journals from Science Citation Index, Social Science Citation Index and Arts & Humanities Citation Index. You can search a specific reference to discover who has cited it over the years and learn about the impact of specific papers. Each article in WOS includes the citation as well as a list of the references cited by the article and a link to who has cited it.

*Access to WOS & effective searching:* Although its primary focus is as a citation analysis tool, you can also search the vast content of WOS by subject / keyword etc. The subject searching features are rudimentary but it is a wonderful resource for searching across disciplines.

WOS is subscription-based. Find out if your institution has a site-wide license.

**CINAHL** or the Current Index to Nursing & Allied Health Literature is a bibliographic database containing references to articles from more than 2900 journals as well as a number of government documents, dissertations, and standards of practice. It covers nursing, biomedicine, alternative / complementary medicine, consumer health and 17 allied health disciplines. It is a valuable resource, especially

for identifying qualitative research studies.

*Access to CINAHL & effective searching:* the CINAHL database is available, by subscription, through Ebsco Publishing. The database has a thesaurus of subject headings called CINAHL Headings. As with MeSH in PubMed and Thesaurus terms in PsycINFO, CINAHL headings may help you to search more effectively by searching for concepts rather than simply searching for occurrences of words. The CINAHL database has many of the same features of PubMed. You can narrow your search of CINAHL headings with CINAHL subheadings and place limits on your search to restrict your results to specific publication types, age groups, dates etc.

This issue of *Information Management for Busy Practitioners* has included brief overviews of a number of databases, other than PubMed, that you might want to search. Depending on the purpose of your literature search you may want to search only one database or, multiple databases to try to be as comprehensive as possible in identifying relevant literature.

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