Searching MEDLINE (OVID)

MEDLINE is an international online database that contains over 22 million references to articles from more than 5600 journals. MEDLINE concentrates on biomedicine, medicine, nursing, health care systems and public health from 1946 to the present. MEDLINE is the primary component of PubMed and is updated daily.

Example of a search topic: you are interested in the drug tamoxifen and its use in the treatment of breast cancer.

1. Access Ovid MEDLINE

2. Decide on your search terms

In this example, the terms you are searching for are breast cancer and tamoxifen. More complex searches may have several search terms.

For assistance with deciding on search terms, please consult your library staff.

The main ways of searching OVID databases are Keyword searching or Subject heading searching.

Keyword searching looks for a word or phrase within a citation, so you will usually pick up lots of results. However, you’ll need to think of every different term and spelling the author may have used to describe that topic (eg pregnancy, pregnancies, pregnant, gestation etc.) or use the truncation symbol * eg pregnan*

Subject searching allows you to find articles on a particular subject without having to search for every possible phrase or word that an author may have used to describe that subject. It will usually retrieve fewer results than keyword searching but they will be more relevant results.

3. Type your first search term breast cancer into the search box, then press Search >

Notice that the Map Term to Subject Heading box is ticked, so you are doing a SUBJECT HEADING search.

This will take you to the subject headings used in the database and display the preferred term to use for breast cancer.
In this example the preferred term to use is the subject heading *Breast Neoplasms*.

4. Choose a subject heading from those suggested

This next screen shows what happens if you click on the term *Breast Neoplasms*. You can see the indexing terms from the thesaurus, and where Breast Neoplasms is positioned in the Subject Tree. You can also see the broader and narrower terms associated with Breast Neoplasms.

At this point you may wish to **Explode** or **Focus** this subject heading.

If you **Explode** the subject term, you will search on this subject term **AND** any more specific subject terms below eg *Breast Neoplasms AND Breast Carcinoma In Situ (10) AND Breast Neoplasms, Male (2625) AND Carcinoma Ductal, Breast (9223 hits)* etc etc from the thesaurus.

Consequently your results will be *more* than your initial 251075 hits for Breast Neoplasms alone.

**Note:** these results will change as more articles are added to the MEDLINE database.

If you choose **Focus**, this will only retrieve articles where this subject heading is the *major focus* of the article, and your results will be *less than* 251075 hits.

If you wish, you can select both Explode and Focus to include more specific subject terms (if available) and only those where the subject term is the main focus of the article.
For this example we are going to select ‘Explode’ and will need to tick the Explode box closest to the number 251075.

When you have made your selection, click **CONTINUE >**

5. Either select sub-headings for the subject heading, or click **CONTINUE >** to automatically select All Subheadings (this is generally recommended)

You now have a set of results for your first search on breast cancer, using the ‘exploded’ subject heading *Breast Neoplasms*. Note that the *Exploded* number is greater than for Breast Neoplasms alone.

6. Now enter your second search term *tamoxifen* into the search box

If you are looking for a particular drug name/ equipment name, it is often best to do a Keyword search but to be comprehensive you could also do a subject search.

*To do a keyword search, remove the tick from the box ‘Map Term to Subject Heading’, enter your term and press Search*
You now have two search sets: set 1 for breast cancer and set 2 for tamoxifen: your most recent search results will always be displayed at the bottom.

However, these 2 searches are separate searches and are not related to each other. These search sets need to be combined to make the search results more relevant by finding documents that contain both search terms.

7. To COMBINE searches and search results
   - select the sets by ticking the boxes you want to combine
   - then select **AND** to find articles that contain *both* search terms

Note: if you choose **OR** you would retrieve articles that deal with either term but they may not contain both terms.

This gives you a new set (set 3) with the results for articles that contain both breast neoplasms ‘**AND**’ tamoxifen.
8. You can apply LIMITS to your results

Click on **Limits** to expand and display the options if you have previously closed this.

Note that when using Limits, you are applying them to your latest search, ie set 3 in our example.

In this example the limits selected are **English Language** and **Publication Year**.

**Additional Limits** are also available (limit to age groups, clinical queries, publication types, gender etc).

After selecting your limits, press **Search**

You now have a new set of results (**set 4**) all of which are in English and published between 2011 and the current date.

9. Viewing your search results

*To save time & scrolling:*
- change the number of results displayed from 10 per page to 100 per page
- and click this button to display all Abstracts
Note: your search terms will be highlighted in yellow.

Use the links on the right hand side to view to the Abstract Reference, or Complete Reference, Find Similar articles or Find Citing Articles AND link to the Full Text.

Note that Complete Reference is not the full-text. It is the citation, all the author affiliations, abstract (if available), subject headings and other information applied to that citation.

You can further limit these results by using Filter By on the left hand side of the screen eg limit to Current year, Subject, Author etc

If there is no Full Text link displayed, click on the link. Item not available… request it!

Clicking this button will automatically populate a request form. Library staff will obtain the article/s for you from another library and you will be sent an email when the full text item is available, usually as a PDF.

10. Print, Email, Export your Results

Tick to select the results you want to print, email, export or save
Or tick this box to select ALL results in 1 action, then select the appropriate icon to Print, Email etc.

Use Export to save your results as Microsoft Word or PDF documents, or use programs such as EndNote or RefWorks.
Then select:
- the Fields to Display (Citation or Citation + Abstract, Complete Reference etc)
- the Citation Style (APA, MLA etc)
Include – URL and Search History are automatically selected

11. My Workspace - My Projects, My Searches & Alerts

My Workspace can be used to
- store saved searches, citations, full text, graphics (My Searches and Alerts)
- create projects and folders within projects (My Projects)

Before you can access and use My Workspace, you need to enter your Personal Account Name and Password

If you don’t already have a Personal Account you will need to create a Personal Account

12. More specific searches: Authors, Titles, Journals, Books etc

Author Search:
- Select the Author search button above the search bar
- Enter the author’s last name, a space and the first initial if known eg Smeithy J
- Click Search
A list of author name options will appear
- Select the name which you wish to search by clicking in the check box
- Click Search for Selected Terms
**Title Search**: use when looking for the *title of an article*.
Select the Title search button above the search bar
- Enter the word or phrase which you wish to search, then click Search

**Journal Search**: allows you to determine if a particular journal is indexed and can be found in the database.
Select the Journal search button above the search bar
- Enter the first few letters of the full title of the journal OR the standard journal abbreviation, if known
- Click the Search button and a journal title index will appear
- Select the name which you wish to search by clicking in the check box, then click Search for Selected Terms

You can also browse, search for or select particular *Journals* and *Books* available through OvidSP using the tabs on the top navigation bar

In *Journals* - for more information click on a selected title or its About link or use the filters (by Availability, Title, Subject etc) on the left

For *Books*, use Search for a known title, or Subject to find books on a particular topic.

Please remember to LOGOFF when you have finished searching MEDLINE

For more information or assistance, contact your local SA Health site library -

health.salus@sa.gov.au