

Evidence-based practice tutorial – Further Searching on the Internet

Basic search tips were described in “An Introduction to Searching on the Internet”.

It is possible to narrow database searches even further using a number features. Different databases will require different features which vary the sensitivity and therefore the specificity of the search. The search features which can be used in combination or singly, are described below:

Truncation * or \$ or :

When placed at the end of a word, this will include terms with all variable endings to the beginning of the word in the search, e.g. analy* will search for analytic, analytical, analyse, etc.

Focus *

When placed at the beginning of a word, this searches for articles in which the word is a major focus of the paper, e.g. *migraine will search for papers with migraine as the major subject

Explode/expand Explode or exp

When placed before a term, this will search for all possible related options, e.g. explode headache will search for different headache types such as cluster, vascular and so on.

NB: some indexers do not consider migraine a type of headache, therefore, to include all headaches the Boolean operator “OR” needs to be added, i.e. explode headache OR migraine

Wildcards ?

When placed within a word, this indicates that the letter it replaces is a variable or absent. The search will include all permutations of the word, e.g. gyn?ecology will search for gynaecology and gynecology

Boolean AND OR NOT

Boolean operators are used between terms to link them. Articles must include both terms, e.g. osteopathy AND evidence-based will show articles including either term.

It excludes articles, which include the term following NOT, e.g. ultrasound NOT diagnostic will exclude diagnostic ultrasound.

Proximity NEAR

Terms linked must occur close to each other, e.g. manipulative NEAR therapy

Limits See Table 4 for specific examples

This can be used to restrict a search by publication type, year, language or other characteristics. Limits can also direct the search for terms to a particular part of the document. Many databases also have a limits option, which can be selected by clicking on it.

Related

Clicking on this hyperlink when you have found a useful reference will search for similar articles in the database.

© Table 3.

The Evidence-Based Case Report: A Resource Pack for Chiropractors. Amanda R. Jones-Harris. Clinical Chiropractic (2003) 6, 73-84.

LIMITING VARIABLES FURTHER:

Variables can be limited still further when searching databases by using the following features:

ab	Abstract
manipulation.ab will search for the word manipulation in the abstract.	
all	All fields
Cranio sacral technique.all will search for the term cranio sacral technique in all fields. However, PubMed will only search in all fields if it cannot match the word in one	

of its Translation tables or Indexes via the Automatic Term Mapping process.	
au	Author Smith a.au will search for articles by the author A. Smith.
dp	Date of publication 1996.dp will search for articles from the year 1996. Dates must be entered using the format YYYY/MM/DD (Year, Month, Day) but month and day are optional. To enter a date range insert a colon between each date, e.g. 1995/01:1996/12.
jn	Journal Spine.jn will search for articles in the Journal Spine.
la	Language English.la will only search for articles written in English.
me or mh	Single word, wherever it may appear as a MeSH (medical subject heading) term. Brachialgia.me or Brachialgia.mh will search for articles with brachialgia listed as a MeSH term.
Majr	MeSH major topic Osteopathic.majr searches for articles where osteopathic approaches are one of the main topics in the article.
ps	Personal name as a subject This limits retrieval to where the name is the subject of the article, e.g. Palmer dd.ps will search for articles about or that reference DD Palmer.
pt	Publication type Clinical trial.pt will search for clinical trials in publications.
px	Subheading preexplosion Diagnosis.px will search for and include all MeSH subheadings that deal with diagnosis.
sb	Subject subset This will search from articles on specialised topics. Subject subsets which are available are: AIDS, bioethics, complementary medicine, history of medicine, space life sciences, systematic reviews and toxicology. Asthma AND cam.sb will search for articles within complementary medicine concerning asthma.
Sh	Subheadings Evidence-based.sh will search for the words evidence-based in the subheadings.
ta	Journal title Manual therapy.ta will only search the journal manual therapy.
ti	Title

Osteopathic.ti will search for articles with the word osteopathic in the title.	
tiab	Title and abstract Manipulation.tiab will search the title and abstract only for the term manipulation
tw	Text words Kinesiology.tw will search for articles with the term in the title, abstract, MeSH terms and subheadings, chemical substance names, personal name as a subject, and MEDLINE secondary source field.
vi	Volume The number of a journal in which an article is published, e.g. osteopathic.ti AND (spine.jn AND 2002.da AND 27.vi) will search volume 27 of spine published in 2002 for articles with osteopathic in the title.
yr	Year 2002.yr will search for articles published during the year 2002 only.

© **Table 4.**

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Information about search techniques can seem very daunting at first, but increased practice and familiarity with these methods makes them more useful. Time is very limited for all researchers and practitioners and the search tips can enormously reduce the time spent online.

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