The Royal Society of Medicine

Medline Helpsheet

What is Medline?

Medline is the U.S. National Library of Medicine's bibliographic database covering the whole field of clinical and preclinical medicine including dentistry, nursing, veterinary medicine and medical psychology. It contains over 23 million bibliographic citations (80% of entries have author abstracts) from over 5,600 journals, indexed from more than 70 countries and is updated daily. For further information, click **i** on the opening screen.

Getting Started

Medline can be accessed remotely via the Dialog system from the **e-Resources** page on the RSM website: **https://www.rsm.ac.uk/resources/search-the-e-resources** by logging in to the **Medical databases** using your RSM registered e-mail address and password.

Medline is provided in its entirety (**'1946 - current'**). To search Medline, click the checkbox beside it followed by the button: **Use selected databases.**

Textword Searching

To search for a word or phrase appearing anywhere in the document, use the following search tips:

Truncation - To search for all words beginning with a particular stem, you can use the wildcard ***** **(asterisk)**. It is recommended that you specify a number of characters after the wildcard.
Examples: **diet*** will retrieve 'diet', 'diets', 'dietary', etc whilst **cat[*1]** will retrieve 'cat' or 'cats', but not 'category'.

Linking Search Terms - It is possible to link terms in several ways to make your search broader or more focussed. Use one of the following:

- **"..."** Enclosing terms in quotation marks specifies that words must be next to each other and in the order specified. Use to find precise phrases.
  Example: **"chronic fatigue syndrome"**

- **OR** OR specifies that at least one of the terms must be present in documents retrieved. Use OR to group synonyms or alternative terms.

- **AND** AND specifies that all terms must be present in each of the documents retrieved. Use AND to connect concepts.

- **PRE/n** PRE/n specifies that terms must be present within a specified number (n) of words of each other in that exact order in each of the documents retrieved.
  Example: **out pre/3 hours** (finds 'out of hours' as well as 'out of surgery hours')

- **NEAR/n** NEAR/n specifies that terms must be present within a specified number (n) of words of each other in any order in each of the documents retrieved.
  Example: **breast near/3 cancer** (finds 'breast cancer' as well as 'cancer of the breast')

- **NOT** NOT specifies that a term must not be present in documents retrieved. Use NOT to exclude information you have already viewed or an unrelated topic **(otherwise use with caution).**
- **(...)** Terms in parentheses (brackets) are processed first. If you mix different links, you must use parentheses to ensure the correct search logic.
  Example: **(hiv or aids) near/5 testing**

Field Searching

In order to add precision to a search, you are able to narrow your search to a specified field. The drop-down menu to the right of the search box allows you to select precise fields (e.g. Document Title, Author, Publication Title, Abstract, etc), prior to running a search by clicking on: **Preview result counts**

Separate codes with commas to search multiple fields at once directly in the search box.
Example: **ti,ab(acne)** will retrieve documents with the word 'acne' in the Document Title or Abstract.

Author Search

Within quotation marks, enter the surname first, followed by a comma, first initial and wildcard. Select **Author** from the drop-down menu. *Example:* **"robinson, t*"**

Journal Search

Enter the journal title in full within quotation marks. Select **Publication** title from the drop-down menu. *Example:* **"european heart journal"**

Thesaurus Searching

Medline citations are indexed using a controlled vocabulary, Medical Subject Headings (MeSH). Searching using thesaurus terms (MeSH) can increase the precision of your search.

Click on the **Thesaurus** link to enter a word or phrase and see all terms in the thesaurus that include your word(s), after clicking on **Find**. Click on the icon to the right of a term to view additional notes for it.

When you have selected a thesaurus term from the list and before clicking on **Add to search**, you may also specify the search in the following ways:

Explode If you Explode a term, Dialog will automatically include any more specific terms that appear below your term in the hierarchy.

Click the checkbox **Explode.** To see what terms willbe included if you Explode a term, click the **blue highlighted term (link)** to see terms above andbelow your term in the thesaurus hierarchy.

Major This restricts your search to those documents in which the term represents the main subject discussed. Click the checkbox **Major.**

Qualifiers You can use qualifiers (also known as 'subheadings') to define a subject more precisely. For example, the qualifiers 'therapeutic use' or 'adverse effects' can be added to the thesaurus term 'aspirin' to focus the search on a particular type of information about aspirin.

Click on the icon to the right of a term to view a list of allowable qualifiers for your term.

Select one or more of the qualifiers from the list and click **Add to search**. Dialog will link your thesaurus term and qualifier as a search term.

Combining Sets

It is possible to combine multiple concepts together to perform a more specific search. Use one of the following Boolean operators to combine search sets:

- **AND** The Boolean operator AND narrows search queries. Retrieved records contain all terms. *Example:* Asthma **AND** Eczema (see set S3 below)

- **OR** The Boolean operator OR widens search queries. Retrieved records can contain either term. *Example:* Asthma **OR** Eczema (see set S4 below)

- **NOT** The Boolean operator NOT excludes terms from search queries. *Example:* Asthma **NOT** Eczema (see set S5 below)

Limiting Sets

The **Search options** tab below the search box provides limit options for: publication date, document type, language, age group, human or animal, gender, journal classification, with an abstract included, and document status.

Displaying and Selecting References

Click the **number of results** link beside the set youwish to view. The first group of citations will bedisplayed. The default display is in groups of amaximum of 100. Click on the **Next page** link to view further citations, if results exceed 100.

To view the abstract and thesaurus terms of anindividual reference, hover over **Preview** beside the citation.

To select a number of references for printing orsaving, either click the **Select** checkbox at the top ofthe page to select all references listed on the page,or click in the checkboxes to the left of individualcitations to select a number of references.

Saving References

To save your selected items, hover over **Export/ Save** to choose an output format (e.g. **RTF, PDF, RIS**) from a drop-down menu. A pop-up window will then appear offering a choice of display formats (e.g. **Citation/Abstract**), to include a copy of your search strategy (**Recent searches**), ensure **Document numbering** and to **Show hit highlighting**. Finally, click on **Continue** to complete saving.

Printing and Emailing References

To print or email your selected items, click on the appropriate icon (**Print** or **Email**) and follow similar instructions to saving references.

Help

For further details on using Medline, click on the **Help** text link that appears at the top right hand corner of each page. Please also refer to the **Further Tips for Database Searching** helpsheet.

Exiting and Logging Off

When you have finished using the databases, logoff using the **Exit** text link on the blue toolbar that appears at the top of each page.

Please contact the Library team by emailing library@rsm.ac.uk if you require any further assistance using the databases or wish to book a tutorial.