

NHS Athens: Improving your database search skills

LOG ON

The Health Information Resources website (www.library.nhs.uk), formerly National Library for Health, provides links to a wide range of high-quality information, including access to major healthcare databases.

- Log in with your NHS Athens username and password on the left of the screen.
- Scroll down and click on the **Books, Journals and Healthcare Databases** section half-way down the middle of the page.
- Click on **Healthcare Databases Advanced Search** below the search box (Fig. 1).

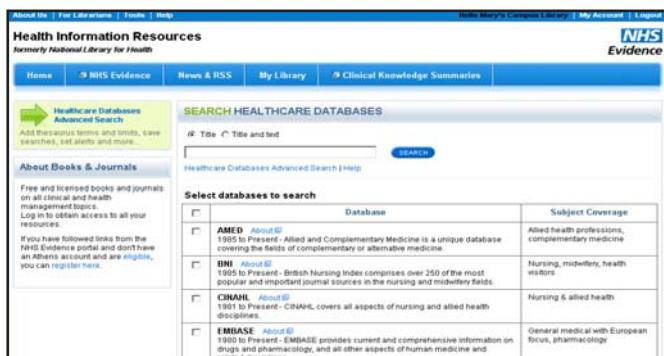


Fig. 1

ADVANCED SEARCH OPTIONS

Both basic and advanced searches can be carried out. To find out how to get started and carry out a basic search you can get a copy of the **NHS Athens: Getting Started** guide from the Library, but an advanced search is recommended as it is quicker and more efficient. This is an in-depth search using one database which allows you to do the following:

- Search all database fields (e.g. title, author, abstract).
- Develop and refine your keyword search using the database's thesaurus and limit options.
- Save searches for future work or set up email alerts to keep you up-to-date with new papers on topics you have searched.

To carry out an advanced search, click on the name of the database you want to use.

HOW TO DO A SUBJECT SEARCH

- Define your search: identify the concepts of your topic and any limits you want to apply.

Example: Find articles on the use of Omeprazole in the treatment of oesophagitis in humans.
Concepts: Oesophagitis; Omeprazole Limits: human

- Enter your first concept and click **Search**.
- To use the thesaurus, repeat the search with the **Map to Thesaurus** box ticked (Fig. 2).

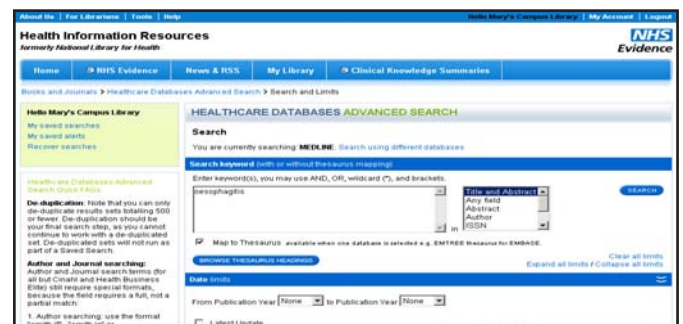


Fig. 2

- A list of thesaurus subject headings relevant to your search will be displayed (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3

- Choose the medical subject heading you are interested in (the 'scope' link may help you decide) by ticking the link next to the term.
- Select **Exploded** to retrieve results containing your selected medical subject heading as well as more specific subject headings (click on the heading to see what terms this includes).
- Click on the **Search** button.

Other options include selecting **Major Descriptor** to limit your results to articles with your term as a major focus and selecting **Subheadings** to narrow your search to one or more specific aspects. (Be wary of applying too many limits though).

NB: If you select **Subheadings** extra options will appear (Fig. 4) for you to select your preferred aspects or outcomes (e.g. diagnosis) and then click on the **Search** button.



Fig. 4

COMBINING SEARCH STEPS

Once you have searched for each of your concepts separately you need to combine these steps. The database keeps a record of your searches and numbers them (Fig. 5), allowing you to go back to earlier searches, combine steps and apply limits.

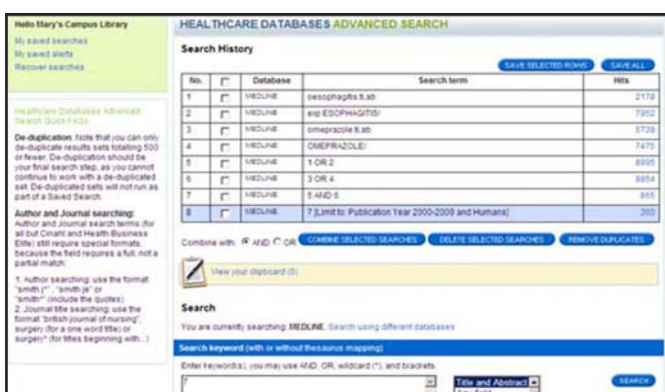


Fig. 5

Search terms are combined using their set numbers. The AND, OR and NOT Boolean operators are used. The AND operator means that both concepts must be part of the article, focusing the context. The OR operator means that either concepts can be part of the article, broadening the context. The search strategy, pictured in figure 5, has used Keyword (natural language) searching and MeSH (subject heading) searching to get a comprehensive result.

Here, either of these terms oesophagitis.ti.ab (keyword) OR exp OESOPHAGITIS/ (Subject Heading) are appropriate. Tick set boxes 1 and 2 and below where it says combine with select OR. Do the same for omeprazole in sets 3 and 4. Finally combine sets 5 and 6 with the AND operator.

To limit your search to Human and Date, type the appropriate set number to limit in the search box, here set 7. Clicking on a limit reveals the limit options. Select the correct options required and click on search.

There are various limits you can use including *Clinical Queries* which will limit your search to causes and outcomes, e.g. *therapy, prognosis, diagnosis or aetiology*.

HOW TO DISPLAY YOUR RECORDS

- Once you have completed your search, click on **Hits** beside the results set you want to look at.

- From your list of results, tick the box alongside the article(s) you want to display or scroll down to select all.
- Click **Next** to see the next page of results and continue selecting the ones you want to display.
- To save or display selected results, go to the box at the bottom of the screen and select the display format you want. We suggest 'medium' as this includes the bibliographic details and any abstract.
- Select the output format. PDF or Word will create a document you can save, or to view it in a web browser you can select HTML.
- Click on **Export Results** to save or view results, or **Email Results** to send them via e-mail.

HOW TO SET UP SAVED SEARCHES

If you want to be able to repeat a search in future, you can set up a saved search.

- Click on **Save All** above the search screen and follow the instructions.
- To look at your saved searches, click on **My Saved Searches** in the box on the left.



Fig. 6

You can also choose to set up an email alert which will enable you to have searches run automatically, and the results sent to your email address.

- Either click on **Save & Create Alert** when saving your search or go to your saved searches, choose the one you want and click **Create Alert**.
- Choose the format and frequency of the alerts.

HOW TO SEARCH FOR A PARTICULAR AUTHOR OR JOURNAL

To find articles by a particular author, type the author name into the search box using the format 'smith j*', 'smith je' or 'smith \$' and select **Author** from the drop-down menu.

To find journals, type the name of the journal you need into the search box and select Journal name from the drop-down menu using quotes, e.g. "journal of applied physiology".

HOW TO GET FURTHER HELP

Library staff can offer advice and training.