# Medline and other Ovid databases - quick guide

**Claire Carolan and Melanie Bickerton, June 2015**

**QG MED008**  [https://www.abdn.ac.uk/library/documents/guides/med/qgmed008.pdf](https://www.abdn.ac.uk/library/documents/guides/med/qgmed008.pdf)

## Introduction

This guide aims to give an introduction to the medical database MEDLINE and other databases available through Ovid.

If you would like more help please contact the Information Consultant for Medicine & Biomedical Sciences, Melanie Bickerton, in the Medical Library - email: m.bickerton@abdn.ac.uk.

## ACCESS INFORMATION

Access is via the University of Aberdeen Library homepage at [www.abdn.ac.uk/library](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/library).

To access this resource both on and off campus, type the name of the database you want to search, e.g. MEDLINE or EMBASE, into the Search Our Collections search box on the home tab. Click on the MEDLINE 1946 to present (Ovid) link – or the EMBASE 1980 to present (Ovid) link.

From the Please Select Your Region drop-down menu, select UK Access Management Federation. Select University of Aberdeen from the list. A login box will now appear - enter your university computer username and password. After the Shibboleth authentication has processed, the Ovid menu of databases will open. Select only one database from the menu. If you select more than one database you will lose important options such as the ability to search using MeSH headings.

## Content

<table>
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<th>Database</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>MEDLINE</td>
<td>MEDLINE covers the international literature on biomedicine, including the allied health fields and the biological and physical sciences, humanities, and information sciences as they relate to medicine and health care. Information is indexed from approximately 3,900 journals published worldwide. Results contain full citation details (author, title, source) and usually a full abstract. <strong>Years covered: 1946 to present</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMBASE</td>
<td>EMBASE is a major biomedical and pharmaceutical database indexing over 3,500 international journals in the following fields: drug research, pharmacology, pharmaceutics, toxicology, clinical and experimental human medicine, health policy and management, public health, occupational health, environmental health, drug dependence and abuse, psychiatry, forensic medicine and biomedical engineering/instrumentation. Results contain full citation details (author, title, source) and usually a full abstract. <strong>Years covered: 1980 to present</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAB Abstracts</td>
<td>CAB Abstracts is a bibliographic database covering the significant research and development literature in the fields of agriculture, forestry, human and animal health, nutrition and the management and conservation of natural resources. It contains citations and abstracts from over 9,000 journals, books and conference proceedings. Results contain full citation details (author, title, source) and usually a full abstract. <strong>Years covered: 1973 to present</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other resources available through Ovid include AMED (Allied & Complementary Medicine Database) and the Evidence Based Medicine Reviews collection.
Search rules

1. Truncation and Wildcards: you can expand your search using the truncation symbols $ or *. For example, depress$ finds depression or depressive, depressed and so on. This function allows you to use word roots to find variations of terms that might be valuable to your overall search. Use it to find variations of terms you may not have considered. Please note that in Ovid database mapping must be turned off for truncation and wild cards to operate properly.

2. ? is a wildcard to signify zero or one letters within or at the end of a word e.g. wom?n finds woman or women; this can also be useful for retrieving terms with British or American variants, e.g. p?ediatrics.

3. Combine and separate your search terms using the Boolean Operators AND or OR or NOT from the search history panel.

4. If combining phrases in the same line, enclose each phrase in parentheses.

5. Further search tips can be found by clicking on Help at the top right-hand corner of the Ovid screen.

Starting your search

Search for your term(s) using both MeSH terms and natural language

Searching for your term using the Medical Subject Headings (MeSH terms)

1. Using the Advanced Search option, select to search by Keyword. Type your first term into the search box. Leave the Map Term to Subject Heading box ticked. Click the Search button.

   The MeSH terms make up the thesaurus of Medline. When you conduct a keyword search with the MeSH term box ticked, the database will search for your term (and its synonyms) by checking the thesaurus using the preferred term. This is a good way to search as the thesaurus does the work for you, retrieving the total concept (e.g. the heading Myocardial Infarction will find that term but also heart attack, heart attacks, cardiac attack etc.).

2. A list of Subject Headings will now be displayed. By clicking on the Scope button to the right of a subject heading, you can see Medline’s definition of the term and a list of synonyms/like terms/plurals that will also be included in the search for that MeSH term.

3. There are two further search options available on this screen: Explode and Focus.

   Explode: if you select the Explode option, your results will include all of your concept’s narrower related terms. As such, this option will increase the number of results. To view those terms click on the MeSH term to see the Thesaurus Tree.

   Focus: if you select the Focus option, your results will only include articles where your concept is the main thrust of the paper. As such, this option will reduce the number of results.

4. Click Continue. A Subheading Display may then open, asking you to select one (or more) aspect of the concept (again, this will narrow down the results). You may do this or tick Include All Subheadings. Click Continue to view your results.
Searching for your term using natural language

There are two ways to search using natural language:

1. Using the Advanced Search option, select to search by Keyword. Type your first term into the search box.

   Following your term, type .tw (e.g. cholesterol.tw). This is a field code, and stands for textword. This will limit your search to titles and abstracts. All of the field codes are available under the Search Fields tab.

   Click the Search button.

2. Using the Advanced Search option, select to search by Keyword. Type your first term into the search box. Leave the Map Term to Subject Heading box ticked. Click the Search button.

   Scroll down to the bottom of the list of Subject Headings and select your original term which will appear in black text.

**Beware:** When you search using natural language, you will not retrieve singular/plurals or American/UK spellings e.g. mouse/mice, esophagus/oesophagus. Natural language searching can be used where a MeSH search gives nothing useful, but should be used with care – MeSH searching is usually more accurate.

Combining your terms and limiting your results

Once you have searched for one or more terms the screen will look similar to this:

**Combining search terms**

There are two ways to combine search terms:

1. Select the search terms that you want to combine by clicking on the terms’ check-boxes in the left-hand column. Click on the relevant Combine selections button.

2. Type your set numbers (e.g. 1 AND 2; 2 OR 5) in the standard KEYWORD search box using AND or OR or NOT to combine the search terms.

   **AND** narrows your search. It will only retrieve results where both terms occur in the same reference.

   **OR** broadens your search. It will retrieve results on Term 1 or Term 2 whether or not they are related.

   **NOT** removes an unwanted term from any set.

**Limiting**

It is possible to focus your results further using the Limits function. This allows you to apply pre-set limits, e.g. human studies only; English language only; specific age ranges etc.

Click on Limits in the main search panel to apply a selection of commonly used limits. Click on the Additional Limits button for the full range of limits.
**Displaying the results**

Click on the **Display** icon on the appropriate line to view the results.

Further limits are available in the left-hand column.

The search results can be re-sorted using the **Sort By** facility in the left-hand column.

To read the abstract, click on **Abstract Reference** in the grey box on the right-hand side.

**Click on the SFX button** to link to University journal subscriptions outwith OVID. Once the SFX window is open, there may be a link to the full-text online. If not, click on Aberdeen University Library Catalogue to see if we hold a hard copy of the journal on the library shelves.

**Saving and exporting results**

There are **Print** and **Email** icons on the results screen.

Select the relevant results by checking the box to the left of the desired record.

To print, click on the **Print** icon. Select the part(s) of the result you want, and the citation style and click the **Print Preview** button to view before printing. Note that you can also print out your search strategy by selecting **Search History**.

When selecting the Email options, remember to enter your entire email address.

**Exporting bibliographic details to a reference management package such as RefWorks**

1. Select the relevant results by checking the boxes to the left of the desired records.
2. Click the **Export** icon at the top of the results list.
3. The **Export Citation List** opens. Under **Export To** select **RefWorks**.
4. Complete the other options and click the **Export Citation(s)** button.
5. The RefWorks login screen will open. Log in to your RefWorks account.
6. Your references from OVID Medline will be brought in automatically to the Last Imported folder in RefWorks.

For more information on RefWorks see QG RFW002: RefWorks 2.0 – a Quick Guide at [www.abdn.ac.uk/library/documents/guides/rfw/qgrfw002.pdf](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/library/documents/guides/rfw/qgrfw002.pdf)

**NOTE**

Workshops on using RefWorks can be booked online via [www.abdn.ac.uk/coursebooking/](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/coursebooking/)

**Personal account**

A personal account with Ovid allows you to create and maintain a private workspace for your saved search strategies and AutoAlerts. There are also more features available to you in the search results screen. To create a Personal Account do the following:

1. Log in to Ovid using your University username and password.
2. Once in Ovid, go to the main search page within the database. Click on **My Account**, then on **Create a new Personal Account** and complete the form.

**Problems?** Please ask the Medical Library staff for assistance – we are always happy to help.