

# Literature Searching

## What:

A systematic and thorough search of published literature in order to collect information on a particular topic.

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, UK

## Purpose:

Literature searches can be used for:

- Creating research proposals
- Planning innovative continuing education strategies
- Thinking through a theoretical base for educational activities
- Collecting information on the effectiveness of educational interventions
- Gathering information for a presentation or lecture

## Challenges:

- Irrelevant results are captured despite selecting suitable keywords
- Identifying appropriate and useful literature databases
- Results that are too numerous to realistically read through all of them

## Strategies:

- Use subject headings rather than text words
- Identify databases suitable to your topic – if your topic encompasses another discipline (such as sociology, business, etc.), check for databases related to these fields
- Break down your question – write out one sentence describing what you are looking for – underline each keyword so it is clear what to search for
- Add limits to searches, eg. restrict searches by dates, language, type of publication

# Literature Databases:

*The following databases are found on the Internet, are searchable, and contain literature relevant to Knowledge Translation*

### Can be searched free of charge:

- RDRB (Research & Development Resource Base) - [www.cme.utoronto.ca/search](http://www.cme.utoronto.ca/search)  
The RDRB is a literature database focusing specifically on continuing education, continuing professional development, and knowledge translation in the health disciplines
- TIMELit (Topics in Medicine) – [www.timelit.org](http://www.timelit.org)
- PubMed (Medline) – [www.pubmed.gov](http://www.pubmed.gov)
- ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) – [www.eric.ed.gov](http://www.eric.ed.gov)

### Require a subscription:

- CINAHL (Cumulative Index to Nursing & Allied Health Literature)
- Cochrane Library / EPOC (Effective Practice and Organisation of Care Group) – [www.epoc.uottawa.ca](http://www.epoc.uottawa.ca)
- EMBASE
- PsycINFO (Psychological Abstracts)
- ASSIA (Applied Social Sciences Index & Abstracts)

## Online Tutorials:

### PubMed (Medline) Tutorials:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?db=mesh>

## (Some) Relevant Journals:

BMJ (British Medical Journal)  
Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice  
Journal of Interprofessional Care  
JAMA (Journal of the American Medical Association)  
American Journal of Managed Care  
CMAJ (Canadian Medical Association Journal)  
JCEHP (Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions)

## References

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2. Searching the health care literature efficiently: from clinical decision-making to continuing education. Shojania KG, Olmsted RN. *American Journal of Infection Control* 2002;30(3):187-95. [PubMed Abstract](#)
3. The art and science of searching MEDLINE to answer clinical questions. Finding the right number of articles. Allison JJ, Kiefe CI, Weissman NW, Carter J, Centor RM. *International Journal of Technology Assessment in Health Care* 1999;15(2):281-96. [PubMed Abstract](#)
4. Information mastery: integrating continuing medical education with the information needs of clinicians. Ebell MH, Shaughnessy A. *Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions* 2003;23 Suppl 1:S53-62. [PubMed Abstract](#)

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