



# London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine Library & Archives Service

## Finding evidence-based clinical information

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# 1 NHS Evidence

## 1.1 What is it?

NHS is a web-based portal that aims to provide NHS staff with access to all of the evidence-based information they require for their professional practice. It is put together by a team of health professionals and information specialists. The service is managed by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence.

## 1.2 How do I access it?

The resource is freely available online at [www.evidence.nhs.uk/](http://www.evidence.nhs.uk/).

## 1.3 What can I find there?

NHS Evidence covers both clinical and non-clinical topics of interest to NHS staff. As this resource is aimed at NHS professionals, it has a pronounced UK bias, both in the topics and issues covered and the documents included. Documents include: guidelines and protocols, systematic reviews, specialist websites, evidence updates, learning materials and patient information. They are produced by a wide range of organisations including NHS bodies, government departments, NGOs, and research institutions.

Most of the information is freely available in full-text.

## 1.4 How do I search it?

Enter your terms into the search box. You can use an asterisk (\*) for truncation, and AND & OR to combine terms together. Use quotations marks "" to find phrases. However, the search interface is not very sophisticated so you should keep your search strategy as simple as possible.

Once you have run a search, your results will be shown. You can then use the tabs on the left hand side of the screen to refine your results further. It is possible to filter results using a number of options including by type of clinical query, type of information, source, and date of publication.

You can also browse collections of information on specific clinical conditions at [www.evidence.nhs.uk/topics](http://www.evidence.nhs.uk/topics).

## 1.5 How do I deal with the results?

There is currently no way to export your results into EndNote. You can create an account within NHS Evidence and save searches and results. It is also possible to set up alerts to notify you of new or updated material.

## 2 The Cochrane Library

### 2.1 What is it?

The Cochrane Library is an electronic resource designed to provide high quality evidence to those working in healthcare. It contains full text systematic reviews, full text critical appraisals of systematic reviews and clinical trials, and a register of clinical trials from around the world.

It is one of the premiere sources of current knowledge in healthcare interventions. However, it does NOT contain information on general healthcare issues such as prognosis, epidemiology and risk factors.

The information available in the Cochrane Library is compiled and written by the Cochrane Collaboration and is coordinated by the NHS Centre for Reviews and Dissemination.

### 2.2 How do I access it?

The Cochrane Library is freely available to everyone in the UK at [www.thecochranelibrary.com](http://www.thecochranelibrary.com).

There are a number of agreements in place around the world to allow free access, more details are available at [www.thecochranelibrary.com/view/0/FreeAccess.html](http://www.thecochranelibrary.com/view/0/FreeAccess.html).

### 2.3 What information is in it?

The Cochrane Library contains seven databases which are searched simultaneously. These are outlined below. The CDSR and “About the Cochrane Collaboration” databases are updated every month and the remainder are updated quarterly.

- The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (CDSR)

This database contains the full text of systematic reviews of the effects of healthcare interventions. The systematic reviews are prepared by the Cochrane Collaboration and are marked as: Complete Reviews, containing the full text of completed and updated reviews; and Protocols, containing details of reviews in preparation.

- The Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effects (DARE)

DARE is prepared by the Centre for Reviews and Dissemination, based at the University of York. It provides critical appraisals of previously published systematic reviews of the effects of health related interventions. These are split into two types: structured abstracts, assessing and summarising previously published systematic reviews judged to be of good quality; and source records, giving references to other published systematic reviews which have not been quality assessed.

- Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL)

CENTRAL contains source information for all controlled trials found by the Cochrane Collaboration groups while compiling their systematic reviews. Both published and unpublished material is included. In addition, the database contains records relating to controlled trials retrieved from both Medline and EMBASE. CENTRAL records include bibliographic details and, in many cases, a summary of the article. They do not contain the full text of the article.

- Cochrane Methodology Register (CMR)

This database contains source information for items of interest to those new to conducting systematic reviews and critical appraisal. It includes all published reports of empirical studies of methods used in reviews, as well as methodological studies that are directly relevant to doing a review. CMR records do not contain the full text of the article.

- About the Cochrane Collaboration

This database gives details of all Cochrane Review Groups and further information about the Cochrane Collaboration.

- Health Technology Assessment Database (HTA)

This database contains critical assessments of healthcare technology assessments, produced by INAHTA agencies and other healthcare technology organisations. Health care technology is defined as prevention and rehabilitation, vaccines, pharmaceuticals and devices, medical and surgical procedures and the systems within which health is protected and maintained.

- NHS Economic Evaluation Database (NHS EED)

This is a register of published economic evaluations of health care interventions, together with critical abstracts. Economic evaluation records include a structured summary and a qualitative assessment together with details of any practical implications for the NHS.

## 2.4 How do I search it?

### 2.4.1 Searching using text words

To conduct a text word search, enter your search words terms in the box situated on the top right of the screen. Click Go to run the search.

Combine synonyms with OR. NB: Entering words as phrases enclosed in quotations e.g., “breast cancer” finds the exact phrase. Entering breast cancer without closed quotes finds records where both words are included in any proximity or order. To find records where two words appear close to each other use NEAR/ followed by the maximum number of words distance they should be apart, e.g., breast NEAR/4 cancer (see Figure 1). The default setting for NEAR is 6 words.

In the Cochrane library the truncation symbol is the asterisk (\*).

The text word search is run across all seven databases and the number of references found from each database is displayed across the top of the results. The search you have just run is highlighted in bold.

Figure 1 - Textword searching

## 2.4.2 Searching using MeSH terms

To search MeSH terms, click on MeSH Search which is found below the search box on the top right of the screen.

Enter your term into the MeSH search box and click Thesaurus (see Figure 2). All MeSH terms which contain the entered word or a recognized synonym are displayed. Select the appropriate MeSH term to view the MeSH tree, showing the hierarchy of terms (see Figure 3).

Figure 2 - Searching the MeSH thesaurus

If you want to broaden or narrow your search along the displayed tree, click on the appropriate term. This will display the 'tree' for the new chosen term.

When the appropriate term has been found, choose either to check the box next to, Search this term only, or to Explode the term on all or one tree, check the box next to the appropriate tree number or numbers (see Figure 3).

	Explode	
All	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Tree Number 1</b>
Tree Number 1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<u>Nutritional and Metabolic Diseases [+2]</u>
Tree Number 2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<u>Metabolic Diseases [+23]</u>
Search this term only	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>Glucose Metabolism Disorders [+5]</u>
		<b>Diabetes Mellitus [+6]</b>
		<u>Diabetes Mellitus, Experimental</u>
		<u>Diabetes Mellitus, Type 1 [+1]</u>
		<u>Diabetes Mellitus, Type 2 [+1]</u>
		<u>Diabetes, Gestational</u>
		<u>Diabetic Ketoacidosis</u>
		<u>Prediabetic State</u>
		<u>Glycosuria [+1]</u>
		<u>Hyperglycemia [+1]</u>
		<u>Hyperinsulinism [+2]</u>
		<u>Hypoglycemia [+2]</u>

Figure 3 - The MeSH tree for the term 'Diabetes Mellitus'

Exploding a term searches for articles indexed with the term or with any of the narrower terms. Searching on the single term only finds articles indexed with the

chosen term, it does not find articles indexed with any narrower terms. It is recommended that MeSH searches are exploded.

Qualifiers (often called sub-headings in other databases using MeSH) can be added to search for a particular aspect of the topic. As many qualifiers as required can be added. Each MeSH term has a list of relevant qualifiers associated with it. Choose qualifiers from the drop-down list. A shorthand code for that qualifier will be added to the box.

Click the 'View Results' button to run your MeSH search. The search is run across all seven databases and the number of references found in each database is displayed across the top of the displayed records. The database from which the data on the screen is taken is highlighted in bold text.

### 2.4.3 Using the search history

To combine searches together, click on the Search History link below the search box on the top right of the screen.

Each search is given an ID number (displayed on the left) these numbers can be used to combine searches together. Boolean operators are used to combine searches.

eg. #3 or #4

To re-run a search or view the results of that search, click on the strategy.

## 2.5 How do I deal with my results?

### 2.5.1 Displaying results

When a search is run, the search is carried out across all databases. Results are returned showing those from the CDSR. The number of results for each type of material is shown at the top of screen. Each of these types of material corresponds to one of the databases (see Figure 4).

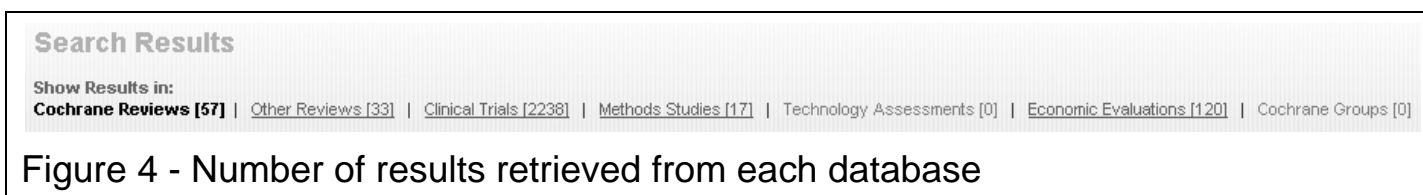


Figure 4 - Number of results retrieved from each database

Click on the relevant type of material to view the titles of the retrieved articles. Click on the title to view the full text of the reference requested. All databases in the Cochrane Library contain full text articles, except the CENTRAL database and the Cochrane Methodology Register which contain only source information and an abstract.

### 2.5.2 Saving and downloading to EndNote

You can download all references from the Cochrane Library into EndNote.

Mark the records you want to export, then at the bottom of the results page choose Export Selected Citations. Choose the export type you require (with or without the abstract) and choose the PC file type.

## 3 TRIP database

### 3.1 What is it?

The TRIP Database is a searchable database of journal articles, critically appraised articles and systematic reviews which are freely available elsewhere on the Internet. TRIP provides an easy to use search interface to search all of these sources at once.

### 3.2 How do I access it?

The TRIP database is available at: [www.tripdatabase.com](http://www.tripdatabase.com) and can be freely accessed by anyone with a computer attached to the Internet.

### 3.3 How do I search it?

TRIP allows basic searching only, and searches the title and text for the words entered.

- Phrase searching: enter phrases in quote marks  
eg “public health”
- The truncation symbol is the asterisk (\*).
- You can use AND and OR to combine terms together.
- You can use brackets to ensure the logic is carried out in the correct order  
eg health and (promotion or education)

### 3.4 How is the information presented?

Once you have run your search, TRIP allows you to filter the results to show only specific types of information. The options include systematic reviews, guidelines and evidence-based synopses.

## 4 Medline clinical queries feature

Medline has some pre-set searches available which allow you to restrict your search to specific types of clinical query. The options are available from the Limits.

These allow you to limit your search to the following:

- Etiology
- Diagnosis
- Therapy

- Prognosis
- Clinical prediction guide
- Systematic review
- Qualitative studies
- Costs
- Economics

These can be either sensitive, specific\* or an optimum balance between the two.

The easiest way to use the clinical queries feature is to run your search in Medline as normal. Once you have a final set of results, expand the Limits option and click the 'Additional Limits' button. Choose the appropriate Clinical Query from the list then click the 'Limit a search' button to apply it to your search.

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\* If a search is **sensitive** it will return a result if it thinks an article may possibly be relevant. If a search is **specific** it returns a result if it thinks an article is definitely relevant.

The best analogy I have come across is comparing a search to a car alarm. If your car alarm is sensitive it will go off whenever it thinks someone may possibly be trying to steal your car, even if they've only accidentally bumped into it. Therefore it is likely to go off rather frequently but the chances are that it will go off if someone IS trying to steal your car. A specific car alarm will only go off if someone breaks the window. Therefore it will go off far less frequently and will not go off if someone steals your car without breaking the window.