Introduction to searching Ovid Medline

Accessing Ovid Medline

Onsite: SVHM intranet home page > Library Catalogue > Databases > Medline (Ovid)

Select Medline (Ovid). You will be prompted for an SVHM email address and password.

Before starting your search

- Register/login to My Account to save searches and results in our Ovid databases (currently Medline, PsycINFO, Emcare & Nursing@Ovid). This is your Ovid login.

- Check which database is selected - you want to search ALL sections of Ovid Medline as shown below

At SVHM we have set the default search to include all sections of Ovid Medline, but this may not be the case at other organisations. It is important to include the in-process and non-indexed citations if you want the most recent results. You have the option to change the resource you are searching if necessary.

The search process - sample search “aggression in dementia”

1. Break your question into simple, separate concepts

For our sample search this will be:

- dementia
- aggression

Our aim is to find citations that refer to both dementia AND aggression (the overlap). We will search one concept at a time and combine the results later.

Hint: With your own search topics you might find that you have 3 or more concepts to combine - just follow the same process.
2. **Brainstorm the concepts**

- Think about how you would define the concepts
- Are there synonyms or related words/phrases? eg aggression/aggressive/violence/violent
- Are there different spellings? eg tumor/tumour

You don’t need to spend a lot of time on this. Just jot your ideas down on a piece of paper. The concepts will become clearer as you explore the database and see how articles are described.

2. **Search the first concept as a Subject Heading**

**Subject Headings** work like tags, and are allocated to articles to make searching simpler, and not reliant on wording used in titles or abstracts (useful when different words are used to describe the same thing, or US vs UK spelling).

Different databases use different sets of Subject Headings to suit their specialities. **Medline** calls its collection of Subject Headings **MeSH Terms**. (**MeSH** = Medical Subject Headings).

To search for a Subject Heading type a word (or very short phrase) into the search box. Keep it as simple as possible. Make sure **Map Term to Subject Heading** is selected.

In this case the first concept is **dementia**. Click **Search**.

This leads to a list of suggested Subject Headings (MeSH Terms). To find out what they mean click on the symbol to the right. It opens the **scope note** which explains the “scope” (or definition) of the Subject Heading.

Make sure the Subject Heading fits your needs. If not, you may need to try another word or phrase.

**Hint:** Don’t assume the suggested Subject Heading is right! For example the MeSH Term “ventilation” means building ventilation rather than airway ventilation!

Click on the most appropriate subject heading to explore the tree view. Only look at one heading at a time. **Do not click Continue yet.**
Look at the columns to the right. These give you some extra options. If you select:

- **Explode** - it will retrieve all citations indexed with that Subject Heading PLUS all narrower Subject Headings in one go - so you will get MORE results on more topics. Be careful to check that the narrower Subject Headings are relevant or you may retrieve too many irrelevant results. You can select individual Subject Headings if you prefer.

- **Focus** (also known as Major Concept) - it will retrieve only citations where that concept is the focus/major concept of the article - so you will get LESS results, but they may be more relevant. Be aware of what you may lose in the process.

**Hint:** Don’t get distracted - consider only one concept at a time. If you see another Subject Heading which seems interesting write it down and come back to it later.

In this example I chose to both **explode** AND **focus** the dementia Subject Heading. This will include results about other types of dementia, including Alzheimer’s, but one of those diseases will need to be a major concept of the article.

Click **Continue** at the top of the page to run the search.

If you have only selected one Subject Heading the next page will show a list of potential Subheadings. These will limit the results even further (sometimes too much).

If you want to use them, you can select as many as you like. **IF IN DOUBT, IGNORE** and just click **Continue** which will keep everything.

**Hint:** Always consider what you might lose by limiting too much.

You should now have your first set of results. The numbers are likely to be huge. Don’t panic! Once we start to combine concepts and limit results the numbers will go down dramatically.

4. **Search the first concept as a textword in the title**

Searching by Subject Headings is important, but it takes time for human beings to index articles and allocate Subject Headings to describe them. This means that millions of recent articles (which we most want) will not yet have Subject Headings, and won’t be found in a Subject Heading search. Therefore we need a back up plan.

Searching a textword or short phrase in the title and/or abstract of an article can solve this problem and add to your search results. It helps to think of synonyms or US vs UK spelling. What words would you expect to find in the title and/or abstract of a relevant article?
In the search box type in **dementia.ti.** Alternatively you can type in **dementia** and click the Title option. It does not matter whether Map Term is selected or not. Click **Search.**

This will retrieve results with the word **dementia** in the title. It will show a completely different number of results to those retrieved using a Subject Heading.

You might want to search for other words with a similar meaning, such as **Alzheimer's.** You can truncate words using an asterisk eg Alzheimer* will pick up Alzheimer, Alzheimers, Alzheimer's etc.

You can search words separately or combine them in brackets as shown below.

If you want to look for textwords in the title or the abstract, add .ti,ab to the end of the search query. This will obviously find more results than looking for words in the title alone.

Try a few of these strategies to see what happens. You can select lines to remove later.

5. **Group the first concept**

Now we want to add these results about the first concept together. We want all results that either have **dementia** (plus the narrower terms) as a Subject Heading OR **dementia OR alzheimer** in the title of the article.

Select the searches you want to combine (in this case 1 or 2). You can group as many search strings as you like, but make sure they are about the same concept (in this case **dementia**). Click on **Combine with OR**. The results will get bigger. Duplicates will be removed automatically. You will now have all the relevant results on the topic of dementia - but we have not yet narrowed them to include aggression.

Note from the results how important it was to search the concept in more than one way. In this case we gained about **13,000 extra results** by searching for words in the title.

Equally, the Subject Heading search found over **24,000 extra results** which were not found by words in the title alone.

It’s really important to see that you need to use both methods to search. Neither technique (Subject Headings vs textwords) is enough on its own.
6. Search the other concept(s)

Search the other concept, **aggression**, in exactly the same way - first as a subject heading, and then as a keyword or phrase in the title and/or abstract. Consider adding synonyms or related terms eg violence

Then group this second concept - **Combine with OR**.

Hint: If you can’t find a relevant Subject Heading try searching for a title keyword first. Then open the Complete Record to see what Subject Headings have been used in those results for indexing. Occasionally very new or rare concepts do not have a Subject Heading and you can only do a textword search.

7. Combine the concepts - find the overlap

Now we want to find the overlap between the different concepts. These are the articles that are about both dementia AND aggression.

Select each of the separate groupings. **Combine with AND**. Your results will get smaller. Duplicates will be deleted automatically. You can combine as many groupings/concepts as you want.

In my sample this gave me about 1600 results, but you may end up with a very different number depending on the choices you made during your search eg explode, focus, synonyms, searching the abstract etc.

8. Limit the results

The last step is to limit the results, and these can be found underneath the search box. In most cases we suggest you only limit by **date range** and **English Language**.

**Be very careful about using other limits**, as many of the articles you retrieved are likely to be from “Non Indexed” parts of Medline. If those citations have not yet been indexed (ie allocated Subject Headings etc) then you risk losing them. For example, if you select “Humans” as a limit, and articles have not been indexed with “Humans” (yet) then you will lose them. Of course if you only want a few results and don’t care how much you lose, then try as many limits as you like!
9. **Exporting results to Endnote and elsewhere**

*Hint:* We recommend using the Endnote bibliographic management program to manage your results as it enables you to save, sort, attach PDFs, cite articles and create bibliographies, regardless of where you get your citations. The software is available on site at St Vincent’s Hospital Melbourne. If it is not on your machine call the IT dept on Ex 4000 to install. The library offers individual Endnote tutorials to get you up and running.

To export your results to Endnote (or elsewhere):

- Select the results you want to export
- Click Export on the blue line at the top of the results
- An Export Citation List screen will pop up
- Select where you want to export it to
- Click Export Citations

If you have Endnote installed the program will open and the citations will go directly into the last library you had open.

10. **Saving results to a folder (My Projects)**

If you don’t want to export results to Endnote you may like to save your results to an Ovid folder instead so that you can access them later. Individual results can be selected by ticking the box in the top left of each citation. You can also select “all” results (up to 1000 at a time) or a range of result numbers.

To add the saved results to a folder:

- Select the results you want to keep
- Click Add to My Projects (top of the results page or under each result)
- An Add item(s) to screen will pop up
- Select a new or existing project
- Complete the project name & description if appropriate
- Add items

When you want to look at these later you will need to:

- Log in to your Ovid account
- Go to My Workspace (on the blue line at the top)
- Select your Project from Manage Projects

11. **Save your search strategy**

- Click Save All just under the search strategy
- Enter a search name when prompted. Consider including the date in the comments field.

When retrieving your search strategy at a later date:

- Log in to your Ovid account
- Go to My Workspace (on the blue line at the top)
- Click on My Searches & Alerts (in the centre just under the blue line)
- Select the search from the list

Need more help? Call the library on (03) 9231 2541. We offer individual search tutorials and can help you troubleshoot most searching issues.