



Keeping up to date with evidence-based practice

A guide to searching research databases



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Foreword

This guide has been developed to support the prosthetic and orthotic workforce to engage with research. This guide will provide the reader with information on how to search a research database in a structured and effective way.

We encourage staff and learners at all levels to get involved with research, quality improvement, and work-based projects; this includes prosthetists, orthotists, technicians, support workers, students, and apprentices. BAPO is committed to providing resources that empower and support the prosthetic and orthotic profession to engage with research.

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Introduction

The purpose of this document

This document has been designed to provide you with a step-by-step guide to searching a research database. The same process can be used for most major databases although there will be slightly different formats for each platform. This guide uses PubMed as an example.

The guide uses an example search sample. However, the same process will apply for all search terms.

Please use the example search and follow each step to familiarise yourself with the process. Once you are happy with how the process should be followed, exchange the search terms for terms relevant to your area of practice.

NOTE

This example search was conducted in 2022 which means the number of papers found at each stage of the search is likely to be slightly different if this search is conducted in the future. Therefore, don't be confused if you apply the same search terms and end up with a different number of available papers.



Evidence-based practice in healthcare

Evidence-based practice is a fundamental principle of modern healthcare that emphasises use of the best available evidence to inform clinical decision-making. This involves integrating research findings and clinical expertise, alongside patient values and preferences, into healthcare delivery¹. It is important because it helps healthcare providers to make informed decisions about patient care, based on best practices.

Improving the quality of healthcare and reducing treatment variation are key objectives of evidence-based practice. It also helps to streamline the patient journey through the healthcare system, reducing healthcare costs by promoting cost-effective interventions and reducing unnecessary treatments^{2,3}. Evidence-based practice can lead to improved patient outcomes by ensuring that healthcare providers are using the most effective treatments and interventions.

One of the main principles of evidence-based practice is the use of literature reviews, systematic reviews and meta-analyses, which synthesise research findings and assess the quality of evidence. This helps healthcare providers to critically evaluate the available evidence and make decisions about which treatments are the most appropriate and effective for their patients. As with all areas of healthcare, evidence-based practice is considered an essential aspect of the prosthetics and orthotics profession^{4,5}, although it has been recognised that some prosthetists and orthotists feel they lack the necessary critical appraisal skills to conduct their own literature reviews to inform their clinical practice⁶. In this respect, this guide has been designed to help individuals in the prosthetic and orthotic profession to improve their skills in conducting comprehensive and effective literature reviews.

HCPC registration and evidence-based practice

In the UK, evidence-based practice is not just encouraged - it is a professional obligation. The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) outlines specific standards of proficiency⁷ that clinicians must meet to maintain their professional registration. Among these is the requirement to engage in evidence-based practice and critically evaluate research to inform clinical decisions.

Prosthetists and orthotists must continually draw on research, reasoning and problem-solving skills when determining appropriate actions (HCPC Standard 4.7) and engage in evidence-based practice (HCPC Standard 11.1). They are also expected to critically evaluate research and other evidence to ensure that their practice remains current and effective (HCPC Standard 13.10).

The importance of staying up to date

Research in prosthetics and orthotics, as well as related fields which can inform prosthetic and orthotic practice, continues to evolve. The findings offer new insights into more effective treatments, improving patient outcomes, and helping to refine clinical techniques. By regularly engaging with the latest research, clinicians can ensure they are delivering the highest quality of care based on the most recent and reliable evidence.

This guide provides the tools needed to search for research evidence. By improving these skills, prosthetists and orthotists will be equipped to enhance their professional development and meet the needs of their patients and the expectations of their profession.

Research databases: an overview

Research databases are electronic libraries that collect, organise, and provide access to research articles, published literature, and other academic resources. These databases are essential not just for researchers and academics, but also for clinicians who wish to keep up to date with evidence-based practice.

One of the most widely used research databases is PubMed, which is a free resource provided by the National Library of Medicine (NLM), containing over 30 million citations and abstracts of biomedical literature, including journal articles, conference proceedings, and other scientific publications.

PubMed has access to a wide range of journals, a large number of which are open-access, meaning that the articles are freely available to read without a subscription. One of the key features of PubMed is the ability to search for such articles based on specific keywords or phrases. This guide will show you a step-by-step process which you can follow and adapt to conduct your own literature review on PubMed.

How are databases organised?

To understand how research databases work, it is firstly important to know how they are constructed and organised. Research databases use a controlled vocabulary, which is a set of terms that are standardised and organised in a hierarchical structure. This structure allows users to search for specific terms and find relevant results.

For example, in PubMed, the MeSH (Medical Subject Headings) vocabulary is used to categorise articles based on their subject matter. Each MeSH term is linked to a set of related terms, allowing users to explore a wide range of topics related to their search.

Another important aspect of research databases is the process of indexing. Indexing involves assigning keywords to articles based on their content. This allows users to search for articles based on specific terms and find relevant results. PubMed uses a combination of MeSH terms and other keywords to index articles.

Searching a database

To search for articles in a research database, users can use a variety of search techniques. One of the most common techniques is using search filters. Search filters are pre-defined sets of keywords that are used to narrow down search results. For example, in PubMed, users can use the "limit to" function to search for articles that were published within a specific date range or that meet specific criteria, such as having a certain number of authors or being published in a specific journal.

Another technique for searching research databases is using Boolean operators. Boolean operators are words that are used to combine search terms and create more complex search queries. For example, users can use the "AND" operator to search for articles that contain two or more specific terms, or they can use the "OR" operator to search for articles that contain either of two specific terms.

In addition to search techniques, research databases also provide tools for analysing and organising search results. One of the most useful tools is the ability to create a saved search. A saved search allows users to save their search criteria and receive automatic alerts when new articles are added to the database that meet their search criteria.

More specific information on keywords, controlled vocabulary, truncation and wildcards is included at the end of this guide.

Now let's take a look at the steps you need to take to effectively search a database.



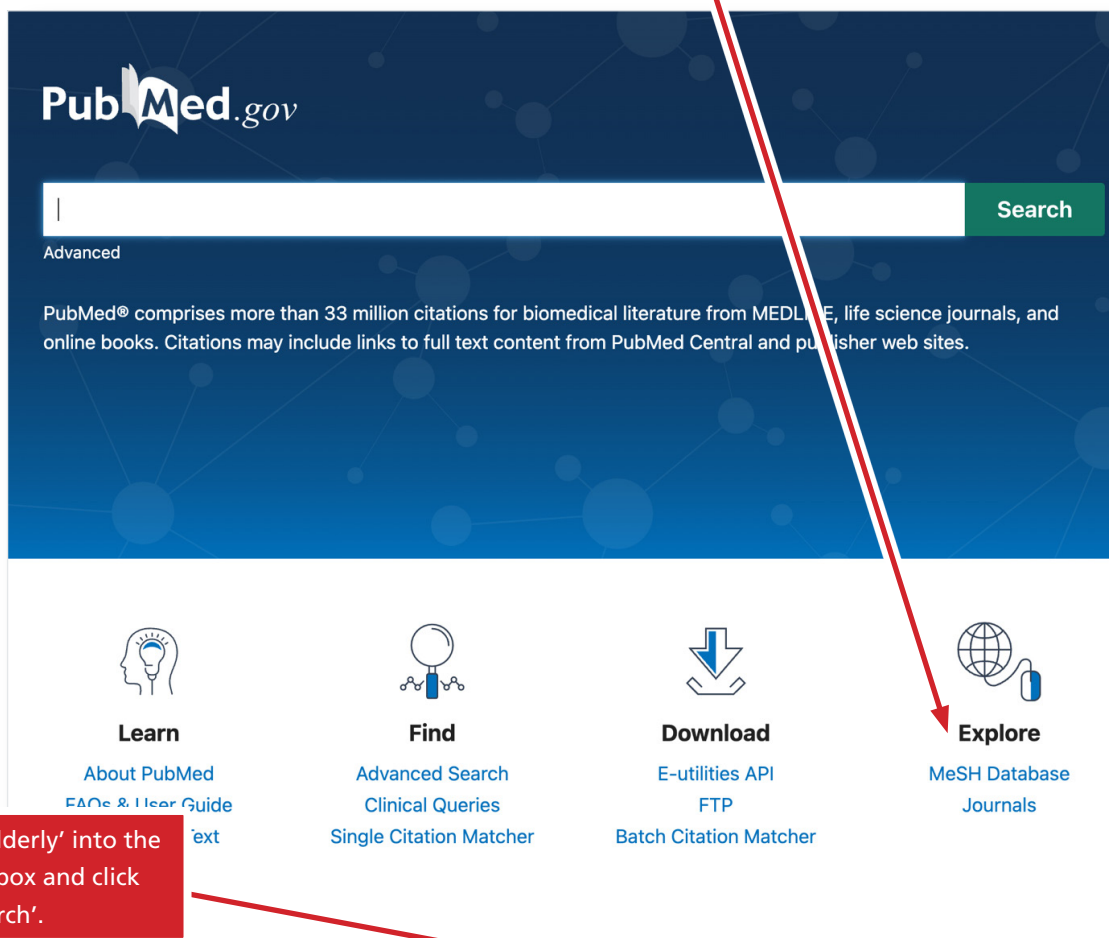
Example search used

"articles on the prevention of falls in the elderly"

Go to <http://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/> It is advised that you create an account and login to enable you to save your searches.

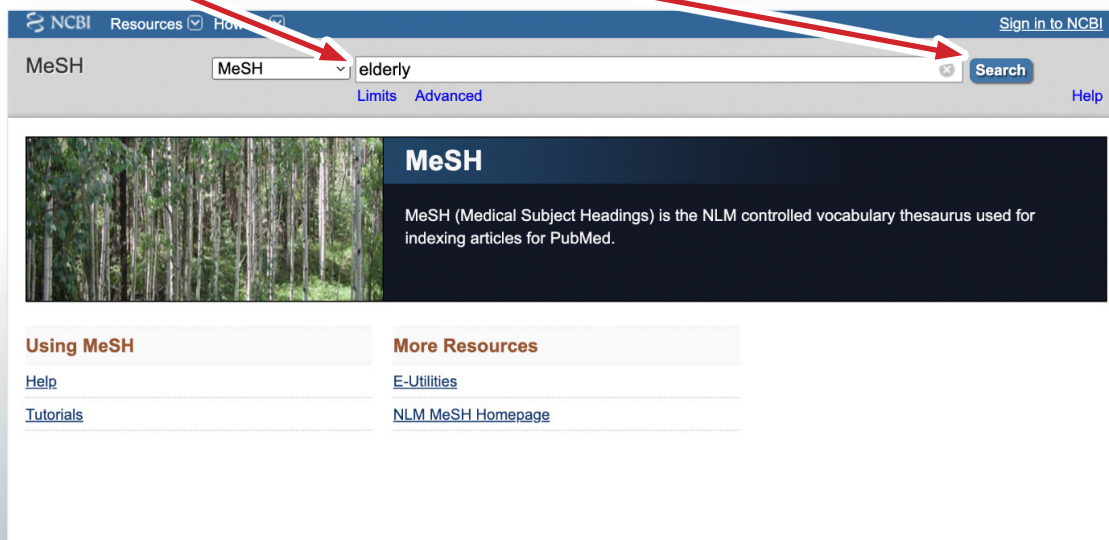
We will start by searching for the appropriate subject headings [MeSH] for our population.

1 Click the MeSH database



The screenshot shows the PubMed.gov homepage. At the top left is the 'PubMed.gov' logo. Below it is a search bar with a 'Search' button. Under the search bar, there is a link to 'Advanced' search. A paragraph of text describes PubMed's content. Below this are four main navigation categories: 'Learn', 'Find', 'Download', and 'Explore'. The 'Explore' category is highlighted with a red arrow pointing to it from a red box above. The 'Explore' category includes links to 'MeSH Database' and 'Journals'.

2 Type 'elderly' into the search box and click on 'search'.



The screenshot shows the MeSH database search results page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'NCBI Resources' and 'How to Use' links. The 'MeSH' section is active, and the search box contains the text 'elderly'. A red arrow points from the search box in the previous screenshot to this search box. Below the search bar, there are links for 'Limits' and 'Advanced' search. The main content area features a header for 'MeSH' with a description: 'MeSH (Medical Subject Headings) is the NLM controlled vocabulary thesaurus used for indexing articles for PubMed.' Below this are two columns of links: 'Using MeSH' (with links for 'Help' and 'Tutorials') and 'More Resources' (with links for 'E-Utilities' and 'NLM MeSH Homepage').

A list of subject headings matching what you have typed will be displayed.

You may not always get an exact match.

**Maybe re-consider the term you are using*

1 Select the appropriate subject heading and click on 'Add to search builder'

The screenshot shows the MeSH (Medical Subject Headings) search interface. At the top, the search term 'elderly' is entered in the search box. Below the search bar, there are options for 'Create alert', 'Limit', and 'Advanced'. The search results are displayed in a list format, with the first result, 'Aged', selected. The 'Aged' result is highlighted with a blue checkmark and a red arrow pointing to it from the instruction box. The 'Aged' result includes a description: 'A person 65 through 79 years of age. For a person older than 79 years, AGED, 80 AND OVER is available. Year introduced: 1966'. Other results include 'Housing for the Elderly', 'Frail Elderly', 'Elder Abuse', 'Elder Nutritional Physiological Phenomena', 'Dental Care for Aged', and 'Health Services for the Aged'. On the right side of the interface, the 'PubMed Search Builder' panel is visible. It contains a search box, an 'Add to search builder' button, an 'AND' dropdown menu, and a 'Search PubMed' button. A red arrow points from the instruction box to the 'Add to search builder' button. Below the search builder, there are sections for 'Find related data', 'Search details', and 'Recent Activity'. The 'Search details' section shows the search query: '"aged" [MeSH Terms] OR elderly[Text Word]'. The 'Recent Activity' section shows a list of recent searches, including 'elderly (7)', 'Working with Filters - My NCBI Help', 'Accidental Falls', 'falls (3)', and 'falls prevention (0)'. A red arrow points from the instruction box to the 'Search PubMed' button.

2 Search for articles tagged with the subject heading by clicking 'Search PubMed'

A list of articles tagged with the subject heading 'aged' will be displayed.

PubMed.gov

"Aged"[Mesh] Search

Advanced Create alert Create RSS

Filters Timeline Sorted by: Most recent Display options

Save Email Send to

3,385,950 results Page 1 of 338,595

1 [Interdependence in the therapeutic compliance of hypertensive older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic.](#)
Cite de Oliveira Lopes T, de Carvalho Santos J, Ribeiro Bitencourt G, Mônica Andrade A, Alves Silva R, Lopes ROP.
Share Rev Esc Enferm USP. 2022 Mar 23;56:e20210537. doi: 10.1590/1980-220X-REEUSP-2021-0537. eCollection 2022. PMID: 35322851 Free article. English, Portuguese.

2 [\[Progress in the research of medial column reconstruction of proximal humeral fractures in the elderly\].](#)
Cite Yao CJ, Zhang HW, Zhang XG, Yu HY, Xie FY, Ma J, Chen B, Quan Z.
Share Zhongguo Gu Shang. 2022 Mar 25;35(3):300-4. doi: 10.12200/j.issn.1003-0034.2022.03.019. PMID: 35322624 Review. Chinese.

3 [\[Clinical analysis of external micro-locking plate in the treatment of fifth metatarsal comminuted fractures\].](#)
Cite Wang N, Wang LX, Xu L, Wu GM.
Share Zhongguo Gu Shang. 2022 Mar 25;35(3):287-91. doi: 10.12200/j.issn.1003-0034.2022.03.017. PMID: 35322622 Chinese.

4 [\[Clinical study on modified Topping-off technology in the treatment of multiple lumbar degenerative diseases\].](#)
Cite Kong P, Tan HD, Zhang JX, Ji CJ, Xu L.

Back to Top

View PDF

1 The next step is to start searching for keywords/free text in the title and abstract. To do this click on 'Advanced'.

1 Choose 'Title/Abstract' from the drop down menu.

2 Type the term to search. You can use truncation if needed. This is a method in which symbols are used in place of letters or words to help you broaden your search. In PubMed, the asterisk (*) is used at the end of the root of your term (minimum of at least four characters). For example, toxic* will search for toxic, toxicity, toxicology, etc.

American English or British English (e.g., anemia or anaemia). Searches will retrieve the same citations regardless of whether the American or British spelling is used.

NIH National Library of Medicine
National Center for Biotechnology Information

ahealy

PubMed Advanced Search Builder PubMed.gov
User Guide

Add terms to the query box

Title/Abstract elderly ADD Show Index

Query box
Enter / edit your search query here Search

History and Search Details Download Delete

Search	Actions	Details	Query	Results	Time
#1	...	>	Search: "Aged"[Mesh] Sort by: Most Recent	3,371,868	05:32:59

Showing 1 to 1 of 1 entries

3 Click 'ADD' and the term is added to the Query box.

Query box
elderly[Title/Abstract]

1 Enter your next search term.

"Older adult" is an example of phrase searching where quotation marks are used to search for the exact phrase.

PubMed Advanced Search Builder PubMed.gov

Add terms to the query box

Title/Abstract ADD Show Index

Query box

Add to History

History and Search Details Download Delete

Search	Actions	Details	Query	Results	Time
#6	...	>	Search: "senior citizen" [Title/Abstract]	375	0:32:51
#5	...	>	Search: "old age" [Title/Abstract]	31,580	0:32:33
#4	...	>	Search: pensioner [Title/Abstract]	200	0:32:21
#3	...	>	Search: "Older adult" [Title/Abstract]	10,187	0:32:02
#2	...	>	Search: elderly [Title/Abstract]	274,921	0:31:36
#1	...	>	Search: "Aged" [Mesh] Sort by: Most Recent	3,385,950	0:30:12

Showing 1 to 6 of 6 entries

2 When you add a search item you must click 'ADD' and then 'Add to History' and then repeat the process for each search item.

1 Once all MeSH terms and free text have been added to the search build you will need to combine them. Click the 3 dots next to the first term (#1) and choose 'add query'. Then add the next term choosing 'Add with OR', do this for all the terms in this category.

PubMed Advanced Search Builder

PubMed.gov

Add terms to the query box

Title/Abstract

Query box

(((("Aged"[Mesh]) OR (elderly[Title/Abstract]) OR ("Older adult"[Title/Abstract]) OR (pensioner[Title/Abstract]) OR ("old age"[Title/Abstract]))))

History and Search Details

Download Delete

Search #	Actions	Details	Query	Results	Time
#6	"senior citizen"[Title/Abstract]	375	09:32:51
#5	"old age"[Title/Abstract]	31,580	09:32:33
#4	pensioner[Title/Abstract]	200	09:32:21
#3	"Older adult"[Title/Abstract]	10,187	09:32:02
#2	...	>	Search: elderly[Title/Abstract]	274,921	09:31:36
#1	...	>	Search: "Aged"[Mesh] Sort by: Most Recent	3,385,950	09:30:12

Showing 1 to 6 of 6 entries

NCBI Literature Resources [MeSH](#) [PMC](#) [Bookshelf](#) [Disclaimer](#)

3 Click 'MeSH' to search the next term

2 All the terms will appear in the Query box. Click 'Add to History'.

1 You now need to search for the second term 'Prevention'.

2 Choose a term that best matches 'prevention' in this context

The screenshot shows the MeSH search interface. At the top, the search bar contains the term 'prevention'. Below the search bar, there are options for 'Create alert', 'Limit', and 'Advanced'. The search results are displayed in a list format, with the first result, 'prevention and control [Subheading]', selected. To the right of the search results, there is a 'PubMed Search Builder' panel. This panel contains a text box with the search query '"prevention and control" [Subheading]', an 'Add to search builder' button, an 'AND' dropdown menu, and a 'Search PubMed' button. Below the search builder, there is a 'Find related data' section with a 'Database:' dropdown menu and a 'Find items' button. The 'Search details' section shows the search query '"prevention and control" [Subheading] OR prevention[Text Word]' and a 'Search' button. The 'Recent Activity' section shows a list of recent searches, including 'prevention (11)', 'older adult (2)', and 'elderly (7)'. The search results list includes the following items:

- [prevention and control \[Subheading\]](#)
 - Used with disease headings for increasing human or animal resistance against disease (e.g., immunization), for control of transmission agents, for **prevention and control** of environmental hazards or for **prevention and control** of social factors leading to disease. It includes preventive measures for individual cases.
Year introduced: 1966
- [Tertiary Prevention](#)
 - Measures aimed at providing appropriate supportive and rehabilitative services to minimize morbidity and maximize quality of life after a long-term disease or injury is present.
Year introduced: 2009
- [Secondary Prevention](#)
 - The **prevention** of recurrences or exacerbations of a disease or complication of its therapy.
Year introduced: 2009
- [Primary Prevention](#)
 - Specific practices for the **prevention** of disease or mental disorder in susceptible individuals or populations. These include HEALTH PROMOTION, including mental health; protective procedures, such as COMMUNICABLE DISEASE CONTROL; and monitoring and regulation of ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTANTS. Primary **prevention** is to be distinguished from SECONDARY PREVENTION and TERTIARY PREVENTION.
Year introduced: 1979
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S.](#)
 - An agency of the UNITED STATES PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE that conducts and supports programs for the **prevention and control** of disease and provides consultation and assistance to health departments and other countries.
Year introduced: 2020 (1983)
- [Accident Prevention](#)
 - Efforts and designs to reduce the incidence of unexpected undesirable events in various environments and situations.
- [Quaternary Prevention](#)

3 Click 'Add to search builder' and click 'Search PubMed'.

The number of articles is huge...
but you're not finished yet...

1 Click 'Advanced' to search
for free text/synonyms

The screenshot shows the PubMed.gov search interface. At the top, the search bar contains the query '"prevention and control" [Subheading]'. Below the search bar, there are links for 'Advanced', 'Create alert', and 'Create RSS'. The search results are displayed in a list format, with the first three results visible. Each result includes a checkbox, a title, a citation, and a share link. The first result is 'Walking and Activeness: The First Step toward the Prevention of Strokes and Mental Illness.' by An N, Chuo J. The second result is 'The Association Between Quarantine Duration and Psychological Outcomes, Social Distancing, and Vaccination Intention During the Second Outbreak of COVID-19 in China.' by Chen L, Wang D, Xia Y, Zhou R. The third result is '[Usage of Artificial Intelligence in the Combat against the COVID-19 Pandemic].' by Fritsch S, Sharafutdinov K, Schuppert A, Bickenbach J. The search results are sorted by 'Most recent' and are on page 1 of 139,902. There are also buttons for 'Filters', 'Timeline', 'Sorted by: Most recent', 'Display options', 'Save', 'Email', and 'Send to'.

PubMed.gov

"prevention and control" [Subheading] Search

Advanced Create alert Create RSS

Filters Timeline Sorted by: Most recent Display options

Save Email Send to

1,399,011 results Page 1 of 139,902

1 [Walking and Activeness: The First Step toward the Prevention of Strokes and Mental Illness.](#)
Cite An N, Chuo J.
Share Comput Intell Neurosci. 2022 Mar 14;2022:3440437. doi: 10.1155/2022/3440437. eCollection 2022. PMID: 35321459 **Free PMC article.**

2 [The Association Between Quarantine Duration and Psychological Outcomes, Social Distancing, and Vaccination Intention During the Second Outbreak of COVID-19 in China.](#)
Cite Chen L, Wang D, Xia Y, Zhou R.
Share Int J Public Health. 2022 Mar 7;67:1604096. doi: 10.3389/ijph.2022.1604096. eCollection 2022. PMID: 35321049 **Free PMC article.**

3 [\[Usage of Artificial Intelligence in the Combat against the COVID-19 Pandemic\].](#)
Cite Fritsch S, Sharafutdinov K, Schuppert A, Bickenbach J.
Share Anesthesiol Intensivmed Notfallmed Schmerzther. 2022 Mar;57(3):185-197. doi: 10.1055/a-1423-8039. Epub 2022 Mar 23. PMID: 35320841 **Review.** German.

Repeat the steps you took to search for free text/synonyms for "elderly" but this time search synonyms for prevention. You must repeat the whole process as before for each set of synonyms.

1 Choose 'Title/Abstract' from drop down menu.

2 Type the terms or synonyms.

PubMed Advanced Search Builder

Add terms to the query box

Title/Abstract AND [Show Index](#)

Query box

(((("prevention and control" [Subheading]) OR (prevent* [Title/Abstract])) OR (Deterrence*[Title/Abstract])) OR (Inhibit* [Title/Abstract])) OR (Stop*[Title/Abstract]))

[Add to History](#)

History and Search Details [Download](#) [Delete](#)

Search	Actions	Details	Query	Results	Time
#12	...	>	Search: Stop*[Title/Abstract]	146,383	09:37:40
#11	...	>	Search: Inhibit*[Title/Abstract]	2,564,168	09:37:22
#10	...	>	Search: Deterrence*[Title/Abstract]	1,312	09:37:15
#9	...	>	Search: prevent*[Title/Abstract]	1,624,846	09:36:50
#8	...	>	Search: "prevention and control" [Subheading] Sort by: Most Recent	1,399,011	09:35:53
#7	...	>	Search: (((("Aged" [Mesh]) OR (elderly [Title/Abstract])) OR ("Older adult" [Title/Abstract])) OR (pensioner [Title/Abstract])) OR ("old age" [Title/Abstract])) OR ("senior citizen" [Title/Abstract])	3,472,697	09:34:33

NCBI Literature Resources [MeSH](#) [PMC](#) [Bookshelf](#) [Disclaimer](#)

3 Click on the box to the right of the search box and choose 'Add'.

4 Click 'Add to History' after each term.

5 You will need to combine the terms for this search as you did for the previous search by clicking on the three dots starting with #8 and choosing 'Add to query' then #3 and choose 'Add with OR'. Complete this for each term and then click 'Add to History'.

6 Click 'MeSH' to search the next term.

Now you need to search the MeSH terms for the next term "Falls".

1 Type the term in the search box and click 'Search'.

The screenshot shows the MeSH search interface. At the top, the MeSH search box contains the term "falls" and a "Search" button. Below the search box, the search results are displayed. The first result, "Accidental Falls", is selected with a checkmark. The description for "Accidental Falls" is "Falls due to slipping or tripping which may result in injury. Year introduced: 1991(1987)". To the right of the search results, the PubMed Search Builder is visible, showing the selected term "Accidental Falls" and the "Add to search builder" button. Below the PubMed Search Builder, the "Search PubMed" button is visible. The search details section shows the query: "accidental falls"[MeSH Terms] OR falls[Text Word]. The recent activity section shows a list of recent searches: "falls (3)", "prevention (11)", "older adult (2)", and "elderly (7)".

2 From the results, choose the most appropriate term.

3 Click 'Add to search builder' and 'Search PubMed'.

Now it's time to search the free text/synonyms for the term "Falls"

1 Click 'Advanced'.

PubMed.gov

"Accidental Falls"[Mesh]

[Advanced](#) [Create alert](#) [Create RSS](#)

Sorted by: Most recent

27,266 results

- [\[Timed up and go values in older people with and without a history of falls\].](#)
1 Ugarte LI J, Vargas R F.
Cite Rev Med Chil. 2021 Sep;149(9):1302-1310. doi: 10.4067/S0034-98872021000901302.
Share PMID: 35319683 **Free article.** Spanish.
- [Anticholinergic Drug Use on Admission and the Risk of In-Hospital Falls in Older Hospitalized Patients.](#)
2 Akgün Ö, Oudshoorn C, Mattace-Raso FUS, Egberts A.
Cite Clin Interv Aging. 2022 Mar 15;17:277-285. doi: 10.2147/CIA.S357818. eCollection 2022.
Share PMID: 35313670 **Free PMC article.**
- [Mortality from falls in the elderly in the Federal District, Brazil: characteristics and time trend, 1996-2017.](#)
3 Silva FMA, Safons MP.
Cite Epidemiol Serv Saude. 2022;31(1):e2021681. doi: 10.1590/S1679-49742022000100003.
Share PMID: 35293515 English, Portuguese.
- [Falls and potential therapeutic interventions among elderly and older adult patients with cancer: a systematic review.](#)
4 Abdelbasset WK, Nambi G, Elsayed SH, Osailan AM, Eid MM.
Cite Afr Health Sci. 2021 Dec;21(4):1776-1783. doi: 10.4314/ahs.v21i4.34.
Share PMID: 35283949 **Free PMC article.**

Lots more results...

Repeat the steps you took to search for free text/synonyms for "Prevention", this time searching for synonyms for "falls"

1 After adding each term to the search builder, click on the three dots and combine them with "OR" as you did in the previous search.

Search	Actions	Detail	Query	Results	Time
#17	...	>	Search: (("Accidental Falls"[Mesh]) OR (Falling*[Title/Abstract])) OR (Trip*[Title/Abstract])	327,220	09:40:14
#16	...	>	Search: Trip*[Title/Abstract]	274,188	09:39:50
#15	...	>	Search: Falling*[Title/Abstract]	31,886	09:39:32
#14	...	>	Search: "Accidental Falls"[Mesh] Sort by: Most Recent	27,266	09:38:33
#13	...	>	Search: (((("prevention and control" [Subheading]) OR (prevent*[Title/Abstract])) OR (Deterrence*[Title/Abstract])) OR (Inhibit*[Title/Abstract])) OR (Stop*[Title/Abstract])	4,927,168	09:38:17
#12	...	>	Search: Stop*[Title/Abstract]	146,383	09:37:40
#11	...	>	Search: Inhibit*[Title/Abstract]	2,564,168	09:37:22
#10	...	>	Search: Deterrence*[Title/Abstract]	1,312	09:37:15
#9	...	>	Search: prevent*[Title/Abstract]	624,846	09:36:50
#8	...	>	Search: "prevention and control" [Subheading] Sort by: Most Recent	399,011	09:35:53
#7	...	>	Search: (((("Aged"[Mesh]) OR (elderly[Title/Abstract])) OR ("Older adult"[Title/Abstract])) OR (pensioner[Title/Abstract])) OR ("old age"[Title/Abstract])) OR ("senior citizen"[Title/Abstract])	3,420,697	09:34:33
#6	...	>	Search: "senior citizen" [Title/Abstract]	37	09:32:51
#5	...	>	Search: "old age"[Title/Abstract]	31,580	09:32:33
#4	...	>	Search: pensioner[Title/Abstract]	200	09:32:21
#3	...	>	Search: "Older adult"[Title/Abstract]	10,187	09:32:02
#2	...	>	Search: elderly[Title/Abstract]	274,921	09:31:36

2 The combined search will appear at the top.

Now you have completed the MeSH and free text searches for the main terms (Prevention, Elderley, Falls), you now need to carry out a search which includes all the terms you have in the search build.

There are a huge number of articles returned for these searches. Combing the searches will reduce this.

Search	Actions	Details	Query	Results	Time
#17	...	>	Search: (("Accidental Falls"[Mesh]) OR (Falling*[Title/Abstract])) OR (Trip*[Title/Abstract])	327,220	09:40:14
#16	...	>	Search: Trip*[Title/Abstract]	274,188	09:39:50
#15	...	>	Search: Falling*[Title/Abstract]	31,886	09:39:32
#14	...	>	Search: "Accidental Falls"[Mesh] Sort by: Most Recent	27,266	09:38:33
#13	...	>	Search: (((("prevention and control"[Subheading]) OR (prevent*[Title/Abstract])) OR (Deterrence*[Title/Abstract])) OR (Inhibit*[Title/Abstract])) OR (Stop*[Title/Abstract])	4,927,168	09:38:17
#12	...	>	Search: Stop*[Title/Abstract]	146,383	09:37:40
#11	...	>	Search: Inhibit*[Title/Abstract]	2,564,168	09:37:22
#10	...	>	Search: Deterrence*[Title/Abstract]	1,312	09:37:15
#9	...	>	Search: prevent*[Title/Abstract]	1,624,846	09:36:50
#8	...	>	Search: "prevention and control"[Subheading] Sort by: Most Recent	1,399,011	09:35:53
#7	...	>	Search: (((("Aged"[Mesh]) OR (Older adult*[Title/Abstract])) OR ("Older person"[Title/Abstract]) OR ("senior citizen"[Title/Abstract])) OR ("senior citizen"[Title/Abstract]))	3,472,697	09:34:33
#6	...	>	Search: "senior citizen"[Title/Abstract]	375	09:32:51
#5	...	>	Search: "old age"[Title/Abstract]	31,580	09:32:33
#4	...	>	Search: pensioner[Title/Abstract]	200	09:32:21
#3	...	>	Search: "Older adult"[Title/Abstract]	10,187	09:32:02
#2	...	>	Search: elderly[Title/Abstract]	274,921	09:31:36

1 Now you need to add all the searches in the 'search builder' to the search field. Click the three dots next to each combined search and click 'add with AND'. In this search you have three combined searches (#7, #13 and #17) which need to be added to create the final search.

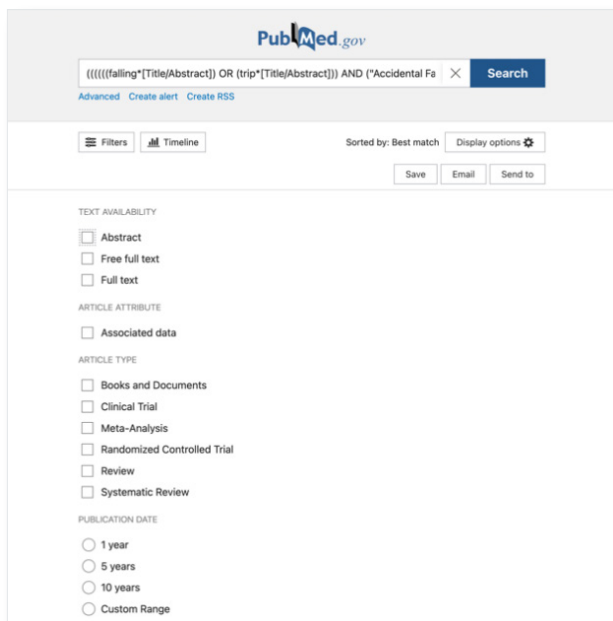
You can use the filter tab to define the search further.

This is the result of all the combined searches; it has reduced the number of articles significantly! But it is still a large number.

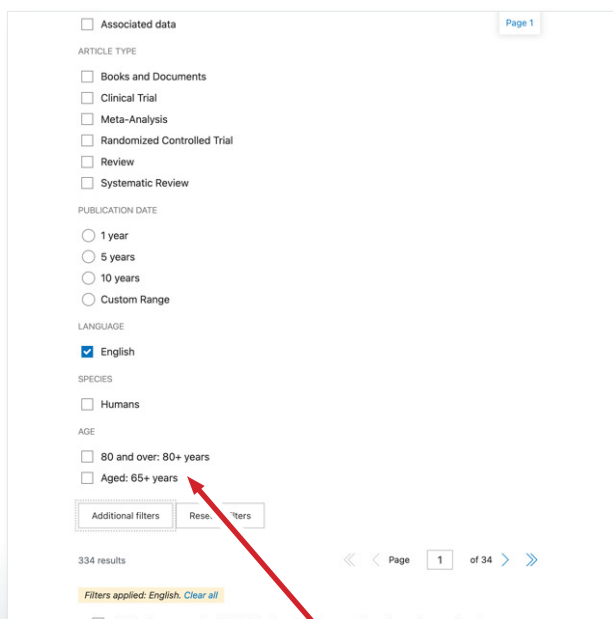
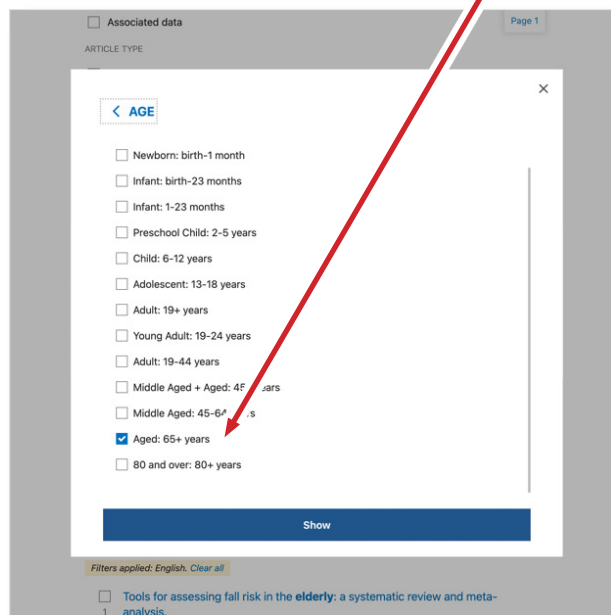
The screenshot shows the PubMed.gov search interface. At the top, the search bar contains the query: `((("Aged"[Mesh]) OR (elderly[Title/Abstract]) OR ("Older adult"[Title/Abstract])))`. Below the search bar are links for "Advanced", "Create alert", and "Create RSS". A "Filters" tab is highlighted with a blue arrow from the callout above. To the right of the filters are options for "Sorted by: Best match", "Display options", "Save", "Email", and "Send to". Below the search bar, the results section shows "14,438 results" and "Page 1 of 1,444". Three search results are listed:

- Balance Problems and Fall Risks in the Elderly.**
1 Cuevas-Trisan R.
Cite Phys Med Rehabil Clin N Am. 2017 Nov;28(4):727-737. doi: 10.1016/j.pmr.2017.06.006.
PMID: 29031339 Review.
Share Falls in the **elderly** are an increasing problem causing a high degree of morbidity, mortality, and use of health care services. ...The clinician should consider screening for falls an important part of the functional evaluation in **older** adults. Several potential inte ...
- Falls in the elderly.**
2 Fuller GF.
Cite Am Fam Physician. 2000 Apr 1;61(7):2159-68, 2173-4.
PMID: 10779256 **Free article.** Review.
Share Falls are the leading cause of injury-related visits to emergency departments in the United States and the primary etiology of accidental deaths in persons over the **age** of 65 years. The mortality rate for falls increases dramatically with **age** in both sexes and in al ...
- Fall Prevention in Community-Dwelling Older Adults.**
3 Phelan EA, Ritchey K.
Cite Ann Intern Med. 2018 Dec 4;169(11):ITC81-ITC96. doi: 10.7326/AITC201812040.
PMID: 30508457 Review.
Share Falls are common among **older** adults. One in 3 adults aged 65 years or **older** and 1 in 2 adults aged 80 years or **older** fall each year. ...As a result, risk reduction is a key focus of **prevention** efforts, even among very **elderly** persons....

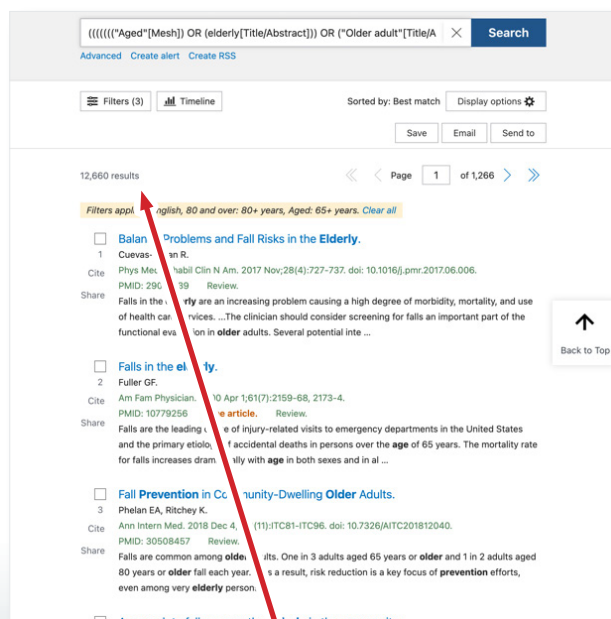
1 Clicking the 'Filters' tab brings up a range of fields which you can choose to limit your search to. If the correct option isn't visible choose 'custom range'.



2 Choosing 'custom range' for age brings up these options. You can see that '80 and over 80 hasn't been included. You can add this to the search by clicking it.



3 Now the age options will appear in the filter fields. Make sure you click them to add them to the search.



4 The filters have reduced the number of articles.

Now you need to decide whether the search strategy (the MeSH and free text terms you used) is too broad or too sensitive... Let's assume you decide it is too broad and what you really need to know is the impact of "Physiotherapy" on falls prevention in the elderly with Parkinson's disease. You can go back and add this term to the search by searching "Physiotherapy" and "Parkinson's" in MeSH database and then searching the related synonyms... like you did previously. Let's repeat the steps.

least one fall within a year. ...Unaddressed risk factors for falls lead to recurrent falls and poor quality of life. **Elderly** people who have experienced falls and n ... Page 1

Preventing Fall Injury.
9 Bolton L.
Cite Wounds. 2019 Oct;31(10):269-271.
PMID: 31730506 **Free article.**
Share Falls are the leading cause of injury, premature institutionalization, and long-term disability in **elderly** adults worldwide, with a fall-related fatality in the United States every 19 minutes.1 According to the Centers for Disease Control and **Prevention**, 2.3 million ...

Summary of factors contributing to falls in older adults and nursing implications.
10 Enderlin C, Rooker J, Ball S, Hippensteel D, Alderman J, Fisher SJ, McLeskey N, Jordan K.
Cite Geriatr Nurs. 2015 Sep-Oct;36(5):397-406. doi: 10.1016/j.gerinurse.2015.08.006. Epub 2015 Sep 3.
PMID: 26343008 **Review.**
... cause of serious injury and injury-related death in the **older adult** population, ... ed with multiple risks such as **age**, history of falls, impaired mobility, balance ... nd medications. Sensory and environmenta ...

334 results ↑
Back to Top

[Show more results](#)

Page 1 of 1

NCBI Literature Resources [MeSH](#) [PMC](#) [Bookshelf](#) [Disclaimer](#)

1 You need to go to the bottom of the search page and choose 'MeSH'.

2 The MeSH search field will appear, and you need to add "Physiotherapy" and click 'Search'.

NCBI Resources How To Sign in to NCBI

MeSH [Limits](#) [Advanced](#) [Help](#)

MeSH
MeSH (Medical Subject Headings) is the NLM controlled vocabulary thesaurus used for indexing articles for PubMed.

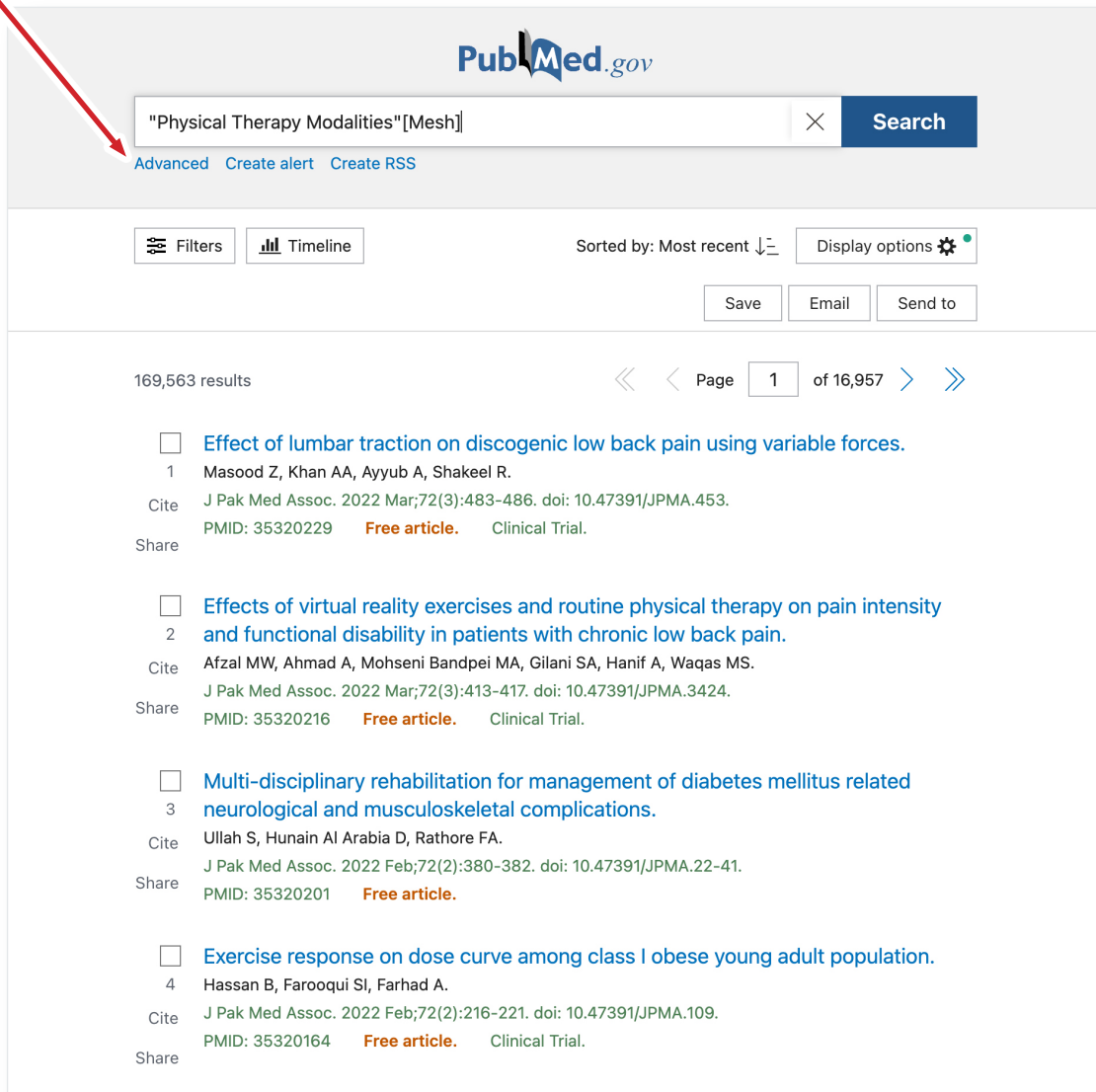
Using MeSH	More Resources
Help	E-Utilities
Tutorials	NLM MeSH Homepage

1 Choose the term which best represents the term you are searching.

2 Click 'Add to search builder' and 'Search PubMed'.

The screenshot displays the MeSH (Medical Subject Headings) search interface. At the top, the search term "physiotherapy" is entered in the search bar. Below the search bar, the "Search results" section shows two items. The first item, "Physical Therapy Modalities", is selected with a checked checkbox. The second item, "Physical Therapy Specialty", is not selected. To the right of the search results is a "Search Builder" panel. This panel contains a text box with the query: "Physical Therapy Modalities"[Mesh]. Below the text box are two buttons: "Add to search builder" and "Search PubMed". The "Add to search builder" button is highlighted with a red arrow. Below the "Search PubMed" button is a "Find related data" section with a "Database:" dropdown menu and a "Find items" button. At the bottom of the page is a "Recent Activity" section listing previous searches: "physiotherapy (2)", "falls (3)", "prevention (11)", "older adult (2)", and "elderly (7)".

1 Click 'Advanced' so you can now search for free text/synonyms.



PubMed.gov

"Physical Therapy Modalities"[Mesh]

[Advanced](#) [Create alert](#) [Create RSS](#)

Sorted by: Most recent

169,563 results Page of 16,957

[Effect of lumbar traction on discogenic low back pain using variable forces.](#)
1 Masood Z, Khan AA, Ayyub A, Shakeel R.
Cite J Pak Med Assoc. 2022 Mar;72(3):483-486. doi: 10.47391/JPMA.453.
Share PMID: 35320229 [Free article.](#) [Clinical Trial.](#)

[Effects of virtual reality exercises and routine physical therapy on pain intensity and functional disability in patients with chronic low back pain.](#)
2 Afzal MW, Ahmad A, Mohseni Bandpei MA, Gilani SA, Hanif A, Waqas MS.
Cite J Pak Med Assoc. 2022 Mar;72(3):413-417. doi: 10.47391/JPMA.3424.
Share PMID: 35320216 [Free article.](#) [Clinical Trial.](#)

[Multi-disciplinary rehabilitation for management of diabetes mellitus related neurological and musculoskeletal complications.](#)
3 Ullah S, Hunain Al Arabia D, Rathore FA.
Cite J Pak Med Assoc. 2022 Feb;72(2):380-382. doi: 10.47391/JPMA.22-41.
Share PMID: 35320201 [Free article.](#)

[Exercise response on dose curve among class I obese young adult population.](#)
4 Hassan B, Farooqui SI, Farhad A.
Cite J Pak Med Assoc. 2022 Feb;72(2):216-221. doi: 10.47391/JPMA.109.
Share PMID: 35320164 [Free article.](#) [Clinical Trial.](#)

Repeat the steps you took to search for free text/synonyms for "Prevention", "Falls" and "Elderly", this time searching for synonyms of "physiotherapy" remember to combine the search for the MeSH and free terms. Repeat the same steps for "Parkinson's disease".

The screenshot shows the PubMed Advanced Search Builder interface. At the top, it says "PubMed Advanced Search Builder" and "PubMed.gov". Below that, there's a section "Add terms to the query box" with a dropdown menu set to "Title/Abstract", an input field "Enter a search term", and an "ADD" button. There's also a "Show Index" link. Below this is a "query here" box with a green circular refresh icon and an "Add to History" button. At the bottom, there's a table with columns "Search", "Actions", "Details", "Query", "Results", and "Time". The table contains one row with search ID #29. The "Query" column contains a complex Boolean search string. The "Results" column shows 98 results, and the "Time" column shows 09:50:18. There are blue callout boxes with arrows pointing to the "Results" and "Query" columns.

Once you have searched MeSH headings and free text for "Physiotherapy" and "Parkinson's disease" and combined each search separately you will need to combine all the searches (Elderly, Prevention, Falls, Physiotherapy and Parkinson's disease) using AND to carry out the final search.

The article number has reduced significantly.

Search	Actions	Details	Query	Results	Time
#29		>	Search: (((((((("Aged"[Mesh]) OR (elderly[Title/Abstract])) OR ("Older adult"[Title/Abstract])) OR (pensioner[Title/Abstract])) OR ("old age"[Title/Abstract])) OR ("senior citizen"[Title/Abstract])) AND (((("prevention and control"[Subheading]) OR (prevent*[Title/Abstract])) OR (Deterrence*[Title/Abstract])) OR (Inhibit*[Title/Abstract])) OR (Stop*[Title/Abstract]))) AND (((("Accidental Falls"[Mesh]) OR (Falling*[Title/Abstract])) OR (Trip*[Title/Abstract])) AND (("Physical Therapy Modalities"[Mesh]) OR (Physio*[Title/Abstract]))) AND (((("Parkinson Disease"[Mesh]) OR ("Shaking palsy"[Title/Abstract])) OR ("Parkinson's disease"[Title/Abstract]))	98	09:50:18

We can see that the combination of additional MeSH terms and free text has reduced the number of articles to just 98. You now need to decide whether the search strategy is too specific...

The search started looking for articles on the prevention of falls in the elderly. The search evolved to be more specific, to include Physiotherapy and Parkinson's disease. This was a demonstration of how a search might start and evolve and how you apply the search to PubMed.

Additional notes

This guide is to demonstrate how to search in PubMed. It is not a demonstration for a suitable search strategy for “The prevention of falls in the elderly”. You might need to consider accessing training on “how to conduct a systematic review” to learn more about search strategies.

Once you have finalised your search strategy for one database, you will need to adapt it for the other sources you have chosen to search. You may need to adapt the controlled vocabulary, field codes, truncation, and/or wildcards.

In order to identify as many relevant results as possible the search strategy should comprise a combination of free text terms and controlled vocabulary.

- If you use free text terms only you could miss articles that do not use your precise terms.
- If you use controlled vocabulary only you could miss articles that have not been indexed yet or have older indexing.

Free text (also known as key words)

Identify the terms you want to search for considering synonyms, alternative spelling variants, acronyms, abbreviations, medical terms, and laymen’s terms. Relevant articles might be missed if not all relevant alternative terms are included in the search.

Remember to consider if it is appropriate to use wildcards and/or truncation for your free text terms within your search strategy.

Controlled vocabulary

A controlled vocabulary is a list of standardised subject headings used by database indexers to describe the subject of a source (e.g., an article or book). Each database has its own controlled vocabulary.

Examples of controlled vocabularies include:

- ERIC (education database) uses Thesaurus of ERIC descriptors
- PsycInfo uses American Psychological Association Thesaurus
- Medline used MeSH (Medical Subject Headings)
- CINAHL uses CINAHL Subject Headings

Truncation and Wildcards

Most databases use the symbol * or # or ?

Truncation - diabet* will return diabetic and diabetes; *glycemia will match hyperglycemia or hypoglycemia

Wildcard – leuk?mia will match both leukemia and leukaemia; wom?n will return women and woman; randomi?ed will return randomised and randomized

Boolean phrases

AND = both terms

OR = either term

NOT = not this term

(ADJacent, NEAR, ... = AND + close)

Phrase searching

Use quotes to find exact phrases e.g., climate AND change versus “climate change”

Setting up an account with PubMed

It is suggested that you set up a free account with PubMed. This will allow you to save results, create bibliographics, and set up alerts. Please go to the following website to create an account <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/>

References

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2. Black AT, Balneaves LG, Garossino C, Puyat JH, Qian H. Promoting evidence-based practice through a research training program for point-of-care clinicians. *The Journal of nursing administration*. 2015;45(1):14.
3. Kumah EA, McSherry R, Bettany-Saltikov J, Van Schaik P, Hamilton S, Hogg J, et al. Evidence-informed vs evidence-based practice educational interventions for improving knowledge, attitudes, understanding and behaviour towards the application of evidence into practice: A comprehensive systematic review of undergraduate students. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*. 2022;18(2):e1233.
4. Jafarian F-S, Rahimi A, Sadeghi-Demneh E. How to Search for Orthotic Literature Using "Brace" Term? *JPO: Journal of Prosthetics and Orthotics*. 2021;33(3):223-6.
5. Highsmith MJ. Contemplating the Current State of the Science in Orthotics and Prosthetics. *JPO: Journal of Prosthetics and Orthotics*. 2021;33(4):241-2.
6. Andrysek J, Christensen J, Dupuis A. Factors influencing evidence-based practice in prosthetics and orthotics. *Prosthetics and orthotics international*. 2011;35(1):30-8.
7. The Health and Care Professional Council (HCPC). HCPC Standards of Proficiency for Prosthetists and Orthotists.; 2023. <https://www.hcpc-uk.org/standards/standards-of-proficiency/prosthetists-orthotists/>. Accessed January 30, 2023.



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