Searching the Literature

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How to Search

• Define your topic succinctly; are there multiple concepts?
• Develop a list of terms and keywords; include alternate terms and acronyms
• Consider using controlled vocabulary (the terms used to index the articles in databases)
  • PubMed – MeSH (Medical Subject Headings)
  • Embase – Emtree terms
How to Search

• Search the terms for each concept separately
• Combine using AND, OR, NOT
  • i.e. (generic OR brand drug names) AND disease
• Use filters/limits to refine your search (date, publication type, etc.)
Using Boolean Operators to Combine Concepts

**OR**
- I want articles that contain either concept. I don’t care which concept.

**AND**
- I want only articles that contain both concepts.

**NOT (use sparingly)**
- I want to disregard any articles that contain a concept.
Not on Target?

- Try different terms/synonyms
- Try combining search terms differently
- Try a different database
- Try ‘Pearl’ searching
Pearl Searching

- Look for the relevant word(s) or phrase in the **title** of the article citation

- Find a couple of good article citations

- Look at how the article is indexed i.e. MeSH or Emtree terms

- Use these terms to find more relevant article citations
Today’s Drug: Herceptin

• Active ingredient: Trastuzumab
• Target Gene: ERBB2 also called NEU and HER2
• Herceptin is a HER2/neu receptor antagonist indicated for:
  • Treatment of HER2 overexpressing breast cancer
  • Treatment of HER2 overexpressing metastatic gastric or gastroesophageal junction adenocarcinoma
• Delivered via intravenous infusion