Searching Tips

Evidence for Nursing
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Searching tips for Evidence for Nursing

Once you have developed your PICO question and identified each of the elements of the PICO formula you can use these as keywords or concepts for your search.

PICO example

Sample scenario

Preoperative Fasting

You are a recently graduated RN and, as part of your new grad program, have just rotated to the day surgery ward. You are asked to admit Joshua, a 7-year old boy who is going to theatre this morning for repair of an inguinal hernia. While completing the preoperative checklist, Joshua’s mother tells you she gave her son a small glass of apple juice at 6am this morning. You express concern that Joshua has had something to drink so close to surgery, believing he should have been fasting from 12 midnight. However, Joshua’s mother shows you an information sheet she was given at Joshua’s visit to the preoperative clinic last week, which has instructions for drinking clear fluids up until 2 hours before anaesthesia. You check with the team leader, who confirms this is correct practice. You wonder about the evidence for this practice, and decide to look into this as soon as you get a chance.

Creating a PICO question and identifying search terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>For young children having minor surgery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Is Fasting from 12 Midnight before surgery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>compared with fasting from 6am before surgery and drinking clear fluids up until two hours before anaesthesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>More effective for a better recovery due to not being so dehydrated – and is it safe?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next step is to decide which terms (words) you should use to search. Focus on the Intervention and what and who it is meant to treat.

Therefore Preoperative fasting and Children are the first terms to search.

The golden rule for searching is: Try to keep your terms brief and concise while also being accurately descriptive.

Don’t try adding too many concepts in the first search. First see how many results you retrieve and if there are too many, you can limit by adding another concept or using other limits available in your database (eg: dates, last five years; publication type etc)

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Then go to the Library website  [http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/](http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/)  .... Simply click on Find Databases ...

Then select the “Health” followed by “Evidence Based Practice”

You can access CINAHL, The Cochrane Library (which includes Cochrane DSR) and Medline from this page, plus other useful databases for evidence based practice topics.
Which Database should I choose?

Different databases are useful for finding different types of information. So think about what it is that you want to find.

Clinical trials, such as Randomised Controlled trials are often published as journal articles within specialist journals. To find these, you can try many different databases. The databases which index the journals you are likely to want to access will be health related databases such as:

- CINAHL (Cumulative Index of Nursing and Allied Health Literature)
- Medline (a very large journal database with an emphasis on medical literature)
- Embase (another very large journal database with an emphasis on pharmaceutical literature)

There are other possibilities – but the above databases all have a specific limit to help you find Randomised Controlled Trials. The worked examples on the following pages explain more about this. You might also find helpful the specific PICO YouTube videos we developed to help you with this assessment task.

Systematic Reviews are sometimes published in journal articles, but there are a couple of special databases which specialise in compiling and providing access to their systematic reviews. These are:

- Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews
- Joanna Briggs Systematic Reviews

Clinical Practice Guidelines are rarely published in journals – so there isn’t much point in looking for them in Medline or CINAHL. They are usually produced by hospitals or government departments for the purpose of providing clinical guidance for health professionals.

They provide recommendations for practice based on specific evidence. So when you are evaluating whether or not to use a Clinical Practice Guideline you should ask yourself the following questions:

- Do these Guidelines include the procedure or practice I’m looking for?
- Do these guidelines provide citations for the evidence they used to develop the procedures?
- Are the citations referring to a Systematic Review or a Randomised Controlled trial?

Clinical Practice Guidelines published by government departments tend to be freely available via the internet and there are a couple of free databases which are good to help you search for them. These are:

- Netting the Evidence (a Google ‘custom search’)

Another database which UTS Library subscribes to is “Up to Date”. This database is highly regarded for clinical guidance, but doesn’t tend to list many high level evidence sources to support its recommendations. So be wary about using sources if they do not provide this information.

Most of the databases mentioned on this page are accessible via the “Evidence Based Practice” databases list on the UTS library website.
Searching in CINAHL

CINAHL stands for Cumulative Index of Nursing and Allied Health Literature. It indexes more Nursing journals than any other database.

When we are following an Evidence based practice approach it is best to break up our search topic – or PICO question into chunks, or individual concepts, and search for each concept one at a time.

It is best to work out what concepts you plan to search – before you start.

With PICO however it makes this step easy as you’ve already done most of the thinking about what the concepts will be. VERY IMPORTANT: If nothing else, make sure your INTERVENTION is included when you search!

So our concepts in our sample scenario will be:
1. Preoperative fasting (intervention)
2. Children (population)
3. Time factors (relates to intervention)

Once you’re in the database, ensure the “Suggest Subject Terms” box is ticked and type in the first term then hit “Search”. This means we are searching via the database’s Subject Heading list which is more focused than searching via key words.

The following screen results:

Select the heading/s which best describes what you’re looking for. There isn’t a heading for Preoperative Fasting, but it tells us to use Preprocedural Fasting instead. Only select more than one if you’re happy for them to be ‘bundled’ together. And click on “Search Database”.

Some headings have a “Scope” note – this usually gives a definition, or an indication for use, which can sometimes be helpful to make sure you’re on the right track.

Once you make a selection, the screen will change a little bit and the “Search Database” will change to Green, so select it.
This retrieves about 101 articles and takes us back to the screen where we started. This doesn’t seem all that many articles for a single concept – however, we would like to show you how to combine your search with a couple of concepts.

Now try typing in “Time factors” in that first line again and click on “Search”. There is a heading for Time Factors, so select it in the same way, and click on the green “Search Database” button.

You will notice that you should now have at least two searches in your Search History. Select each line and then click on “Search with AND” to get the following result:

We now have 21 articles in our list of results, which is a fairly small number considering we still have more to do – we need to limit to find any “randomised controlled trials” which might be included in this set. We also haven’t limited to Children or included a term for children. Hopefully when you do your search, you will retrieve larger sets. However, it may be that this database simply has too few articles.

You can select options down the left column of the results list to narrow your results further – firstly, it is important to have recent results, so it is useful to limit by date. The date slider is easy to use for this. Simply click and drag the slider from the left hand end to the right. As you do this the earliest date gets more recent – stop and let go once you reach, say 2006, so you then will have only articles from the last five years. However there are some really useful limits if you select “Show More” … (see the next page)
Once in the “Show more” section, you will see a whole new page of limits you can choose from.

About halfway down the page is a tick box for “Randomized Controlled Trial”. Try selecting it.

A little further down the page is a scroll down box which has Age Groups. Scroll down until you see All Child, and select it.

And go to the bottom of the page and click on “Search”
If you select something and then find you have no results, simply go back and unselect that limit and try something else – or run your search again with fewer terms. If this happens, you should try looking for your RCT via Medline.

This is what my final **Search History** looked like: (only ended up with one item which was a Randomized Controlled Trial)

And this is the article:
If you look at the content of this, you’ll see it isn’t relevant for our scenario – even though it does address **Preprocedural fasting**.

For this assignment, you are not required to find the full text – just an abstract. Abstracts are usually provided within the database you are searching. But occasionally there will not be one available. In that case you may be able to obtain an abstract from the full text version of the article. If there is a full text link or PDF showing in the database, you can simply open it. Otherwise try SFX.

To see if the **full text** of any article in the list is available, click on “Check SFX for availability”. When you select SFX, something like the following screen will pop up and indicate are any other options for full text available in other databases available through the library. Click on the link and another screen will pop up and should take you directly to the article in the new database.

**Important note**: it is foolish to limit your search to “Full Text” or “abstract”. This will eliminate all articles which do not have full text or an abstract appearing in the database you are searching and therefore will eliminate many important items from your results. It is often possible to get the full text or an abstract for an article through another service or there may be an abstract with the full text version of the article even if not listed in the database. Just because the database you searched doesn’t provide an abstract or full text doesn’t mean it’s not available somewhere else. It often is!

To help you manage your results – for this and other assignments, you can select the articles you want to investigate further later as you scan down the list by selecting where it says “Add to folder”. Once you’ve been through the list you can view all your selections in one list by clicking “Folder View” under “Folder has items” on the right side of the screen. Alternatively go to the very top of the page and click on where it says “Folder”.

A list of your selections will appear. From this screen you can save, print, email or export (to Refworks or EndNote) your results.

If you want to keep your search for a later occasion, you can set up a personal account in Ebsco – click on where it says “**Sign into MyEbscoHost**” at the top of the page, and select “**Create a new account**”
Searching in Medline

When using Medline, the default is “Advanced search” which should have the “Map term to subject heading” button already ticked. This allows you to search via the subject headings which have been allocated to each article record rather than doing a key word search. This should result in a more focused and accurate search as all the articles which are significantly about preoperative fasting will have the subject headings “Preoperative care” and/or “Fasting”.

Search each term individually to identify the best subject heading which describes each concept you want represented in your search. Be aware that the term used in the subject headings may not always be exactly what you expect – and may be different in different databases.

Type in “Preoperative fasting” in the search space and click on Search (or hit Enter).

The following screen will appear and as you can see, there is no heading which exactly fits with preoperative fasting. The closest ones are “Preoperative Care” and “Fasting”. However, we do not want to select both of these at once. We probably need both of them, but we need to search them one at a time.

So first select the box next to “Preoperative Care” and then click on “Continue”.

Note also the “Hints” in the green box below which explain about the Explode and Focus options. The “Scope” gives you more information and may provide a definition which can be handy sometimes.
Select the best term from the list and click on “Continue”. If you see a list of subheadings on the next page, it’s probably best at this stage to simply click “Continue” again. Alternatively you can bypass that page by clicking on “Include All Subheadings” from this page.

Repeat this process for each term you want to search – such as “Fasting”:

This database doesn’t automatically reveal the search history, but you can easily find it by clicking on Search History in the blue bar above the search space to reveal it.

Once you’ve represented each of the concepts, select each set and combine them using AND.
We have now a set of 124 articles in our results. We could start scrolling down and looking at them, but there are still a few more things we can do: You can limit your search further by selecting “Limits”… this is where you can limit to the last five years (ie 2006-2011)

You can limit your search results to just include “Randomised Controlled Trials”. To do this, select where it says “Additional Limits” and find the box which has a pulldown menu saying Publication types. If you want to choose more than one option in each box menu, hold the control key down as you select, but we only want the one on this occasion.

I found 24 items in this list which are RCTs. However, we have not limited to recent years – or to children.

While we are at this (Additional Limits) page, we can also use the Age Group limit for Children (perhaps “All Child”) and Publication Year : 2006-Current

Don’t be tempted to use too many limits!!! You might end up with too few results – or nothing! If that happens, go back and undo one of the limits.

When I tried all this, I have ended up with just one RCT… which may or may not be helpful. What do you think?
In your list of results, **SFX** is a linking tool to help you find the full text if it is available via another database – and if there is no abstract showing, as you do not need the full text for this assignment.

**To show your search history**, there are a couple of options.

1. use “**Print Screen**” to paste the search history table into your Word document. (much like the screen shots provided in this handout!)
   a. Hit the **PrtScn** button on your keyboard (next to the F12 button) which captures the whole screen.
   b. **If you have a Mac use this:** Apple (Command) Key + Shift+3 or Apple (Command) Key + Shift+4. The ‘4’ option allows you to just capture a portion of the screen and the ‘3’ option will capture the whole screen.
      
      And then paste it straight into your word document. To crop the image, use the “**Picture Tools**” which has a cropping tool.

2. Alternatively, from Medline, choose your article and select it. Then scroll back to the top of the results list where it says “Print”.

   That will throw up another screen where you need to select the “**Citation + Abstract**” and “**Include Search History**” options: (and then click on “Print Preview”)

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That will provide you with the search history and the Abstract on one screen which you can print or capture the screen.
Searching in Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews

The Australian government has provided access so all Australians can search The Cochrane Library. UTS Library also subscribes to The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (an important part of the Cochrane Library) via OVID. However, there are limited licences to that version, so you will find access via the Wiley version more reliable.

There are a number of choices available for searching this database. You can try the Advanced Search (where you can limit to particular databases such as the DSR) or you can do a MeSH search using the same subject headings which appear in Medline. However, in most cases you will probably find much of what you need by simply typing in your brief terms in the Search box and hit Go. It automatically shows the Systematic Reviews first and usually there is likely to be only one Systematic Review (if any) for each specific topic.

This has found just one result – which is a Review (or Systematic Review). Click on the title to see more information:

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You will find all the information you need in the Abstract. Cochrane systematic reviews are designed to be easy to read because they follow a standard format. To navigate around, use the linked headings.

You can also scroll down to see the References (all RCTs) which were included in this systematic review and those which were not included for whatever reason.
Searching in Netting the Evidence

*Netting the Evidence (NTE)* is a customised subset of Google which focuses only on Evidence Based Practice resources.

It was originally compiled by Andrew Booth, a Medical librarian in Sheffield, UK and can be located by searching for ‘Netting the Evidence’ in Google – or via this link:

http://www.google.com/cse/home?cx=004326897958477606950%3Adjcbxrkatm

To search it, simply enter your PICO question plus the words “Clinical Practice Guideline”.

This is not as focused as using additional limits in Medline, so you may need to exercise discernment in scanning your resulting lists – as the results will come from a variety of sources. You will need to interpret for yourself what kinds of publication each actually is – for instance, if the item is a journal article in PubMed, it probably isn’t actually a Clinical Practice Guideline – but might simply be referring to one. Look for URL addresses with .gov or .org perhaps. You will also need to track your search history from Google NTE to other databases (such as the TRIP database) until you eventually find your paper, so that it is obvious that your search started in NTE.

However, you will find it a very useful resource as there will be items which do not appear in other databases. Because many excellent clinical practice guidelines are available freely on the net, these will not be available via most subscription databases but can be found via *Netting the evidence*. 