



## Savvy Searcher

### Overview of Database Resources

When you need medical information, you probably instinctively head for a computer and access the Himmelfarb Library homepage (<http://www.gwumc.edu/library>). From there, you may go a bit farther and access the Databases/MEDLINE page using the menu on the left-hand side of the screen. At that point though, confusion can set in:

- Which database should I use?
- How do I search it?
- What will the results look like?

If you have any questions about searching or finding information, you should talk to librarians at the Reference Desk. They are familiar with the databases available, search strategies, and methods for narrowing your search to the most relevant information. Plus, they are eager to help you! If you're not in the Library, you can also call in (202-994-2850) or send e-mail ([library@gwumc.edu](mailto:library@gwumc.edu)). The Reference Desk is staffed from 8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday and from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Fridays. Saturday hours are 12 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Himmelfarb Library also offers one-hour classes to teach GWU Medical Center faculty, staff and students to use information resources. Many classes are free. Some require registration fees from Hospital and MFA staff. Check the Library homepage for Tutorials & Instruction, or go straight to the Library homepage for the Continuing Education Course Schedule.

### [Search Skills: Apply Your Savvy](#)

As you look at the databases offered, you'll realize that a lot of them function in the same way. You can search a number of databases using the Ovid search system. Once you've used this search interface on one database, you'll have the tools in hand to search other Ovid databases. Himmelfarb Library offers the following databases through Ovid: MEDLINE, AMED, CINAHL, Health and Psychosocial Instruments (HAPI), PsycINFO, SPORTDiscus, EBM Reviews: Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, EBM Reviews: ACP Journal Club, EBM Reviews: Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effectiveness, and EBM Reviews: Cochrane Controlled Trials Register.

While not all databases are available through the Ovid interface, you can transfer some of the search savvy that you acquired from Ovid searching to other interfaces. You can check these database systems for the mapping features and controlled vocabulary that you used in Ovid or similar tools like thesauri and indexes. You can also look at other databases with an eye toward narrowing your searching to recent years, to human research, and to English-language publications. Non-Ovid databases include eMedicine, African HealthLine, MDConsult, Natural Medicines, and Web of Science.

In the past, database searching referred almost exclusively to indexes of journal articles and other types of periodical publications. In recent years however, many reference books have become available in an electronic format. While journal articles tend to describe recent research and study results, reference books can provide overviews of topics. When you need a definition or general description, reference books can provide immediate and full-text access to information. MDConsult and Books@Ovid are linked on the E-Texts page and both provide access to a number of full-text reference books.

In addition to journal articles and textbooks, some databases provide full-text information that has never been previously published in either format. FirstConsult offers clinical information in a format designed for quick look-up and reference. EMedicine offers full-text, peer-reviewed, continuously updated articles describing a wide range of diseases and conditions. Natural Medicines provides full-text, high quality information on herbs, vitamins, food supplements and other types of alternative medicines.

### **Search Results: Full-Text and Abstracts**

Although some indexes are beginning to offer full-text articles and other publications, many extremely useful indexes still offer only citations and abstracts. This means that when you examine your search results, you'll examine summaries and descriptions of journal articles rather than the complete journal article. While you may prefer full-text databases, remember that a lot of useful information can be found in the abstract of an article and valuable information may *not* be available full-text online.

When searching an index, use abstracts to your advantage. By reading an article summary, you may acquire enough information to know if the complete article contains the information that you need or if you need to keep looking. In this way, abstracts can save you time by helping you eliminate irrelevant or off-target articles and allowing you to focus on articles that have the information that you need.

You should select a database based on the **type of information** that you need: recent studies are available in journal articles versus summary information which is offered by reference books. MEDLINE is the most comprehensive medical database in existence and is frequently a good place to start for journal articles. MDConsult and Books@Ovid both offer searchable collections of full-text reference books.

After considering the type of information, focus on the **content** coverage of the databases available to select the one that best meets your search needs. MEDLINE is the premier biomedical database in the world; CINAHL covers the nursing and allied health literature; SportDISCUS provides access to sports and sports medicine literature; and PsycINFO details psychologic and psychiatric information.

Finally, you should consider the **format** of the information resources available. You will need to decide between abstracted and full-text information sources, depending on the scope of your search and the time available.

## **Database Selection: Keep it Relevant**

The following annotated list of databases should give you an idea of the breadth and format of information available.

[African HealthLine](#) - Collection of bibliographic databases on African health issues provides access to African Index Medicus, CAB Health Database (African subset), Healthlink Worldwide, Medicines Information Centre Reference Database of the University of Cape Town, Community Health Information Database, SAMED, AIDS Consortium Resource Centre Database, MEDLINE (African health subset), Index to South African Periodicals (African health subset), South African Index to Theses and Dissertations (African health subset), Bibliography of Filariasis, African Laboratory for Natural Products Database, and Waterlit. Coverage: 1966 and earlier - Present.

[AMED](#) (Allied and Complementary Medicine) (Ovid) - covers fields allied to medicine and complementary medicine, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, rehabilitation, podiatry, and palliative care. Coverage: 1985 - Present. Produced by the Health Care Information Service of the British Library.

[CINAHL](#) (Ovid) - the Cumulative Index to Nursing & Allied Health database provides authoritative coverage of the literature related to nursing and allied health. Coverage: 1982 - Present.

[Clinical Evidence](#) (Ovid) - "Clinical Evidence is a continuously updated international source of evidence on the effects of clinical interventions. Clinical Evidence summarizes the current state of knowledge and uncertainty about the prevention and treatment of clinical conditions, based on thorough searches and appraisal of the literature. It is not a textbook of medicine nor a set of guidelines. It describes the best available evidence and if there is no good evidence it says so." Produced by the BMJ Publishing Group.

[EBM Reviews: ACP Journal Club, Cochrane Database, and DARE](#) (Ovid) - This multifile database allows you to search simultaneously the Evidence Based Medicine Reviews databases: ACP Journal Club (ACP), Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (COCH), and Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effectiveness (DARE). Term Mapping is not available in Multifile databases.

[EBM Reviews: ACP Journal Club](#) (Ovid) - collection consists of two journals: ACP Journal Club, a publication of the American College of Physicians, and Evidence-Based Medicine, a joint publication with the British Medical Group. Coverage: 1991 - Present.

[EBM Reviews: Cochrane Controlled Trials Register](#) (Ovid) - CCTR contains over 300,000 bibliographic references to controlled trials in health care. Produced by the Cochrane Collaboration along with the National Library of Medicine (U.S.) and Reed Elsevier (The Netherlands).

[EBM Reviews: Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews](#) (Ovid) - full text of the regularly updated systematic reviews of the effects of healthcare prepared by The Cochrane Collaboration. Coverage: Current. Produced by the Cochrane Collaboration.

[EBM Reviews: Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effectiveness](#) (Ovid) - a full-text database containing critical assessments and structured abstracts of systematic reviews from medical journals from around the world. It covers topics such as diagnosis, prevention, rehabilitation, screening, and treatment. Produced by the National Health Services' Center for Reviews and Dissemination (NHS CRD) at the University of York, England.

[eMedicine](#) - Knowledge-based information system that provides access to peer-reviewed, continuously updated medical reference articles, PDA downloadable textbooks, and an image library. Also provides personalized education system and CME, CE, and OCEU.

[FirstConsult](#) - Evidence-based clinical information tool with information on differential diagnoses, medical conditions, procedures, and patient education. FirstConsult is updated weekly and draws heavily on the National Guideline Clearinghouse, Cochrane systematic reviews, and Clinical Evidence as information sources.

[Haz-Map](#) - is an occupational toxicology database designed to link jobs to hazardous job tasks which are linked to occupational diseases and their symptoms. It is a relational database of chemicals, jobs and diseases. Coverage: Current. Produced by the Specialized Information Services of the National Library of Medicine.

[Health and Psychosocial Instruments](#) (HAPI) - Access to information on measurement instruments (questionnaires, index measures, rating scales, tests, etc.) in the health fields, psychosocial sciences, and organizational behavior field. Coverage: 1985 - Present.

[LILACS](#) - Covers Latin American and Caribbean health sciences literature. Indexes articles from 670 + medical journals and also includes : theses, thesis chapters, books, book chapters, congress and conference proceedings, technical and scientific reports, and government publications. Coverage: 1982 - Present. Produced by BIREME, a PAHO Specialized Center.

[MDConsult](#) - Clinical knowledge system provides access to electronic textbooks, practice guidelines, drug information, journal search, news, and patient education materials with emphasis on full-text materials. Individual login and password required-inquire at Reference Desk.

[MedCarib](#) - Covers health sciences literature from English speaking Caribbean countries. Includes books, book chapters, theses, technical reports, congress and conference proceedings, and journal articles. Coverage: 19th century - Present. Produced by Caribbean Net.

[MEDLINE](#) (Ovid) - encompasses information from Index Medicus, Index to Dental Literature, and International Nursing, as well as other sources of coverage in the areas of allied health, biological and physical sciences, humanities and information science as they relate to medicine and health care, communication disorders, population biology, and reproductive biology. Coverage: 1966 - Present. Produced by the U.S. National Library of Medicine.

[MEDLINEplus](#) - access through web links to extensive information about specific diseases and conditions, consumer health information from the National Institutes of Health, clearinghouses, dictionaries, lists of hospitals and physicians, health information in Spanish and other languages, interactive health tutorials, and clinical trials. Coverage: current. Produced by the U.S. National Library of Medicine.

[Natural Medicines](#) - Information on natural medicines including alternate and scientific names, uses, safety, efficacy, mechanism of action, active ingredients, adverse reactions, interactions, drug influence on nutrient levels and depletion, dosage and administration, brand names, and patient education handouts.

[OSH-ROM](#) (Silver Platter) - Occupation Safety and Health - bibliographic databases pertaining to occupational health and safety, and environmental medicine. Coverage varies by database. Produced by SilverPlatter's Health and Safety Publishing group.

[PDQ](#) - contains peer-reviewed summaries on cancer treatment, screening, prevention, genetics, and supportive care; a registry of approximately 1,800 open and 10,300 closed cancer clinical trials from around the world; and directories of physicians, professionals who provide genetics services, and organizations that provide cancer care. Coverage: current. Produced by the National Cancer Institute.

[POPLINE](#) - international coverage of population, family planning, and related health issues. Coverage: 1970 - Present (some sources date from 1827). Produced by the Population Information Program, Center for Communication Programs, Johns Hopkins University.

[PsycINFO](#) (Ovid) - professional and academic literature in psychology and related disciplines including medicine, psychiatry, nursing, sociology, education, pharmacology, physiology, linguistics, and other areas. Coverage: 1887 - Present. Produced by the American Psychological Association.

[PubMed](#) - free access to Medline. Coverage: 1966 - present. Provided by the National Library of Medicine.

[RehabData](#) - is the leading literature database on disability and rehabilitation. The main file describes over 12,000 documents covering physical, mental, and psychiatric disabilities, independent living, vocational rehabilitation, special education, assistive technology, law, employment, and other issues as they relate to people with disabilities. The types of documents described in REHABDATA include research reports, books,

journal articles, and audiovisual materials. Coverage: 1997 - Present. [Backfile available - 1956-1996] Produced by the National Rehabilitation Information Center.

[SPORTDiscus](#) (Ovid) - serial and monographic literature in the areas of sport: recreation, exercise physiology, sports medicine, coaching, physical fitness, the psychology, history and sociology of sport, training, and conditioning. Coverage: 1949 - Present. Produced by the Sport Information Resource Centre.

[TOXNET](#) - a cluster of databases on toxicology, hazardous chemicals, and related areas, including HSDB, IRIS, CCRIS, GENE-TOX, TOXLINE, EMIC, DART/ETIC, TRI, ChemIDplus, HSDB Structures, and NCI-3D. Coverage: varies by database. Sponsored by the National Library of Medicine, through the Toxicology and Environmental Health Information Program of its Specialized Information Services Division.

[UpToDate](#) – collection of original topic reviews to provide evidence on medical conditions. Information is written by physicians and undergoes a peer-review process.

[Web of Science](#) - Search the Science Citation Expanded Index, the Social Sciences Index, and the Arts & Humanities Index. Perform cited reference searches. Coverage: 1992 - Present. Produced by ISI.