Searching for evidence using EBSCOhost

1. What is EBSCOhost?

EBSCOhost is a search platform that enables you to search a variety of medical databases including CINAHL Plus with full text, MEDLINE Complete and the Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection.

Databases that you can search with EBSCOhost:

CINAHL Plus with full text
CINAHL is the largest medical database. Produced by the US National Library of medicine it contains millions of citations from thousands of biomedical and life science journals. It covers *allied health specialties, dentistry, nursing, medicine, pre-clinical sciences.* In addition to this CINAHL Plus with Full Text provides full text for more than 770 journals indexed in CINAHL. This includes the full text for many of the most used journals in the CINAHL index, with no embargo. Full text coverage dates back to 1937.

MEDLINE Complete
MEDLINE Complete provides authoritative medical information on medicine, nursing, dentistry, veterinary medicine, the health care system, pre-clinical sciences, and much more. MEDLINE Complete uses MeSH (Medical Subject Headings) indexing with tree, tree hierarchy, subheadings and explosion capabilities to search citations from over 5,400 current biomedical journals. MEDLINE Complete is also the world's most comprehensive source of full text for medical journals, providing full text for over 1,800 journals indexed in MEDLINE. Of those, more than 1,700 have cover-to-cover indexing in MEDLINE, and of those, over 900 are not found with full text in any version of Academic Search, Health Source or Biomedical Reference Collection. This wide-ranging file contains full text for many of the most used journals in the MEDLINE index - with no embargo. Coverage dates back to 1857 and full text back to 1865.

Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection
Psychology & Behavioral Sciences Collection is a comprehensive database covering information concerning topics in emotional and behavioral characteristics, psychiatry & psychology, mental processes, anthropology, and observational & experimental methods. This is the world's largest full text psychology database offering full text coverage for nearly 400 journals.

Note: - to search British Nursing Index (BNI), Embase, PsycInfo or other databases you will need to use a different interface. Medline is also available via the OVID interface if you prefer to search that. Please see the Library and Knowledge Service's **Find the Evidence** webpage for further information and guides at **https://www.knowledge-nw.nhs.uk/find-the-evidence**

2. How do I Access EBSCOhost?

- You can access EBSCOhost via the Library and Knowledge Service webpage. This can be found at: http://www.knowledge-nw.nhs.uk

  Alternatively, if you are on a Trust computer you can click on our icon on the desktop.

- Then click on the My Resources icon.

- Select **Databases** and click on the EBSCOhost database that you want to search from the list provided.

- You will now need to log in to your *OpenAthens* account to access EBSCOhost.

- Choose the database you wish to search. If searching CINAHL select **CINAHL Plus with Full Text** as this will give you access to more full text articles.

- Once you have opened EBSCOhost click on **Sign In.**

(If you don't have an OpenAthens account you can easily register for one by clicking on the **Register** button on the **library homepage**, selecting **Register with NHS OpenAthens** and completing the online form).
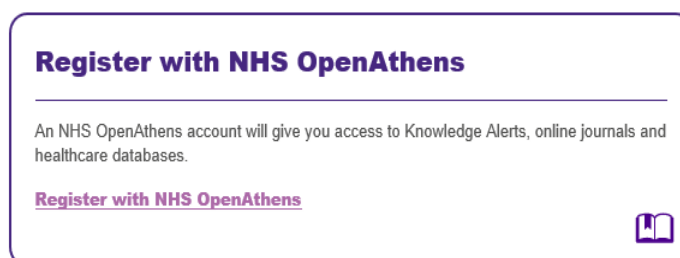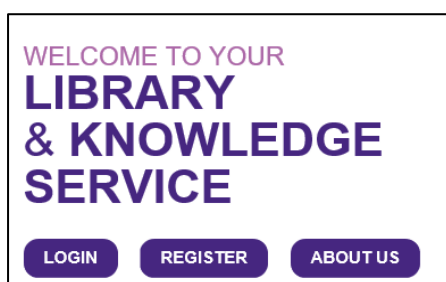
> ### What is an NHS OpenAthens Account?
> **OpenAthens is the brand name of a system that provides access to the online resources that your organisation has purchased such as e-journals and databases.**

3

3. Questions and Concepts

It is important that you have a clear idea of your question before you start to search – what you get out of a database search is only as good as the question you put in. Consider what your main topics are and try to frame it as a question. **PICO** is a framework that can help with this.
Think about the:

    Population you are interested in (age group, gender, people with a particular condition?)
    Intervention (what is the treatment or test being used?)
    Comparison – if any (do you want to compare this treatment to another?)
    Outcome (what is the outcome of interest? Patient mortality, reduction of symptoms, improved quality of life, reduced pain?)

Example: In patients with osteoarthritis of the knee is hydrotherapy more effective than traditional physiotherapy in relieving pain?

    P: Osteoarthritis and knee
    I: Hydrotherapy
    C: Physiotherapy
    O: Pain relief

If PICO does not work for your question, other frameworks are available:
https://medhealth.leeds.ac.uk/info/639/information_specialists/1500/search_concept_tools

Once you have thought of your question and search terms, consider what synonyms and alternative spellings or brand names there might be for your terms. You will need to search for these too.
    Example: aspirin, acetylsalicylic acid, ASA.
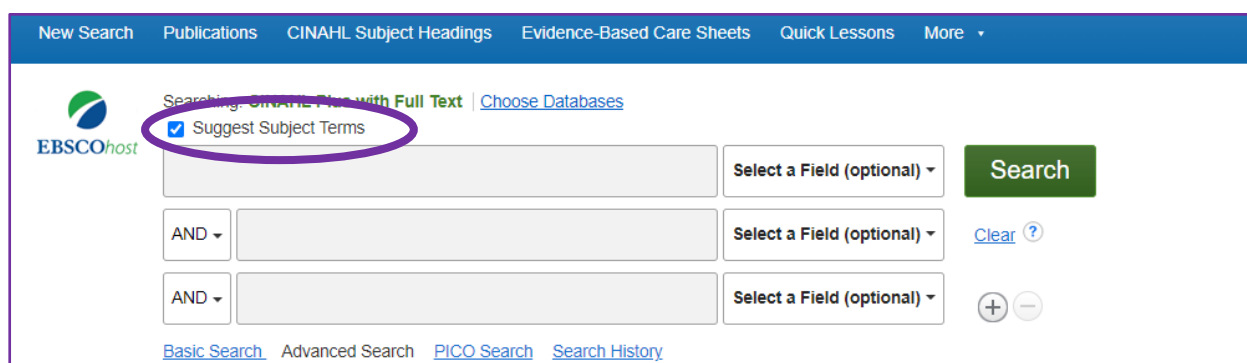
4. Carrying out a Thesaurus Search

A thesaurus is a list of terms (known as subject headings) that are used to label articles in a database. When you search using the thesaurus you will find all the articles on the same topic no matter what text words you use.

For example: There are many possible phrases that could be used to search for articles on *heart attacks*, but the CINAHL subject heading for this condition is **myocardial infarction**. If you were to carry out a thesaurus search on CINAHL for this subject heading you would find all the articles on this subject regardless of whether they contain the phrase myocardial infarction, heart attack or cardiac arrest etc.

- Tick the box to select **Suggest subject terms**

- Type your term into the search box and then click on **Search**.

- You will be shown a list of headings that most closely match your search term. Sometimes this list can be quite long, other times there might only be one term that matches your search. If there is no close match there will be no headings listed – try to think of another term for your subject and try again. **If you cannot find a relevant thesaurus term – carry out a text word search instead.**

- Click on the heading that most closely matches the subject you are searching.

- You will then be taken to a page that shows more detail about the thesaurus term you selected. You can find out more by clicking on the symbol ![symbol] on the right to see the scope notes.

- Here we can see the hierarchy of the various related thesaurus headings. **Heart Diseases** is the broader term that we could select if we wanted to also include articles that covered heart disease more generally. We can also see narrower terms which we can select to look at more specific types of heart failure – e.g. Dyspnea, Paroxysmal.

- Tick the box to the left of the term to select it.

Explode and Major Concept:

Explode allows you to expand your search to include additional, more specific terms.
Major Concept will limit your search to only those articles in which the thesaurus term is the main subject of the article.

For example:
Selecting explode for the thesaurus heading Heart Failure will find all the articles about heart failure in general, as well as all the articles under the heading *Dyspnea, Paroxysmal.*

Note that you can use the **Major Concept** and **Explode** options at the same time.

Also note that you have to select your term using the box on the left before you are able to select the **Explode** and/or **Major Concept** options.

Subheadings:

Once you have selected the term you wish to search you will also be given the option to restrict your search to specific subheadings. You can choose any number of relevant subheadings by clicking the appropriate boxes. If you do not want to limit your search to specific subheadings leave the default **Include all subheadings** option selected.

- After selecting the headings you need to click on **Continue**.

- Once you've selected the term you wish to search, then chosen if you want to use explode or major concepts, and finally selected any subheadings you might want to use – click on the green **Search** button.

- EBSCOhost will now run your search and you can see the number of results in your **Search History**.

5. Carrying out a Text Word Search

This is also sometimes referred to as a keyword search or free text search. Type in the term you are looking for and EBSCOhost will look for records that include that term. It uses the *exact* term that you type in, so it is important to consider if there are alternate terms you should also be searching for. Consider if your term has alternative spellings (anaesthetic, anesthetic) or synonyms (stroke, cerebrovascular accident) or abbreviations (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, ADHD) or brand names (ibuprofen, neurofen).

- To carry out a text word search, untick the **Suggest Subject Terms** box before typing the term you are looking for into the search box and then clicking **Search**.

- EBSCOhost will now run the search and a new search line will be added to your **search history**.

- Note that EBSCOhost defaults to searching the **title, author, abstract** and **subject heading** for text word searches. If you would prefer to search other fields you can select the ones you want from the drop down list in the optional **Select a Field** box.

Phrase Searching

If your term is made up of a phrase, rather than a single word, then using phrase searching will help. This is done by placing parentheses around the phrase you are searching for.

For example: entering the phrase *"mental health"* will only retrieve results that include the words *mental* and *health* when they are next to each other. If you do not use parentheses you will retrieve all records where both the terms *mental* and *health* appear anywhere in the text (possibly with many other words between them) and in any order.

6. Combining your Searches

To retrieve relevant articles you will need to link your various searches together. This is done by using **AND** or **OR** (known as Boolean searching).

OR searching broadens a search by looking for either

AND searching narrows a search by only looking for both terms in combination
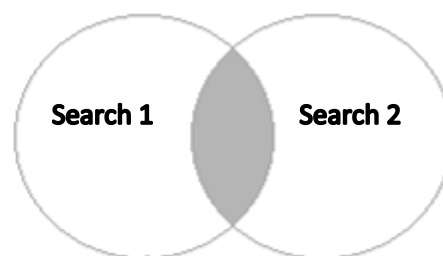
- For example. In the search below, we have searched using the thesaurus heading *anemia, sickle cell* (S1) and we carried out a keyword search for *penicillin* (S2).

- We can combine them using **OR**, by clicking in the box next to the search lines to be combined and then selecting the **OR** option.

- This gives us a new set of search results in our **search history** (S3), with 11,580 articles found.

Search ID#	Search Terms	Search Options	Actions
☐ S3	S1 OR S2	**Expanders** - Apply equivalent subjects **Search modes** - Boolean/Phrase	🔍 View Results (11,580)
☐ S2	penicillin	**Expanders** - Apply equivalent subjects **Search modes** - Boolean/Phrase	🔍 View Results (5,992)
☐ S1	(MH "Anemia, Sickle Cell")	**Expanders** - Apply equivalent subjects **Search modes** - Boolean/Phrase	🔍 View Results (5,657)

- If we were to combine the two searches using **AND** we get only 69 results.

☐ S3	S1 AND S2	**Expanders** - Apply equivalent subjects **Search modes** - Boolean/Phrase	🔍 View Results (69) ℹ
☐ S2	penicillin	**Expanders** - Apply equivalent subjects **Search modes** - Boolean/Phrase	🔍 View Results (5,992)
☐ S1	(MH "Anemia, Sickle Cell")	**Expanders** - Apply equivalent subjects **Search modes** - Boolean/Phrase	🔍 View Results (5,657)

7. Limits

If you are getting too many results, you can apply *limits* to narrow your search further. You can apply limits such as **Language**, **Dates** or **Age Group** to ensure the articles you retrieve are more likely to be relevant.

- First you need to be sure you are looking at the right set of results. You can do this by clicking on **View Results** on the relevant search line.

Search ID#	Search Terms	Search Options	Actions
☐ S3	S1 AND S2	**Expanders** - Apply equivalent subjects **Search modes** - Boolean/Phrase	🔍 View Results (69) ℹ Vie
☐ S2	penicillin	**Expanders** - Apply equivalent subjects **Search modes** - Boolean/Phrase	🔍 View Results (5,992) ℹ
☐ S1	(MH "Anemia, Sickle Cell")	**Expanders** - Apply equivalent subjects **Search modes** - Boolean/Phrase	🔍 View Results (5,657) ℹ

- On the left of your screen you will be able to see the **Limit to** options. Click on **Show more** to see all the limits that you can apply to your search.

Select the limits that you want to apply to your search and then click on the yellow **Search** button.

In this example I have limited my search to English Language only and 2010 to 2022.

- This will give you a new search line in your search history. By limiting our search to English Language only and articles published since 2010 we have gone from 69 results (S3) to 38 results (S4).

8. Saving your Search Strategy

You may want to save your search strategy. This is a good idea if it is a search you might want to rerun at a later date or if you need a record of the search strategy to include in the write up of your search.

- To save your search history, tick the **Select/deselect all** box and then click on **Save Searches/Alerts.** You also have the option here to **Print Search History**.

- You will then be prompted to create a name for your search. You can also add a description if you wish, Select the database that you carried out your search in (CINAHL Plus with Full Text). You can then decide whether to save your search permanently, temporarily or save it as an **Alert**.

- Click on **Save** to save your search.

- You will then get a message to say your search has been modified. Click on **Continue**.

- Use the **Back** button to return to your search.

- To view your saved searches, go to **Folder**.

- From here you can see all your saved searches. You can delete the search, move it to a folder, retrieve the search and edit it as needed.

9. Viewing your Results

When you are happy that you have completed your search you can look at the results that you have found. The results will contain the citations for all the articles that EBSCOhost has found. You can *view* the results*, export* them and *save* them in a range of different formats.

- To view your results, click on **View Results** for the relevant search line and they will be displayed lower down the page.

- There are a number of options available to you at this point. You can change the order of the results (by author, source, relevance or date), the number of results per page, and how much detail you see for each individual result.

- You will see a **Full Text** option under each article for instant access to the PDF or to a form to request it from the library. You may prefer to save your results to review at a later time.

10. Saving your Results

Before you save your results, you will want to create a folder to save them into. To do this, click on **Folder** at the top right of the screen.
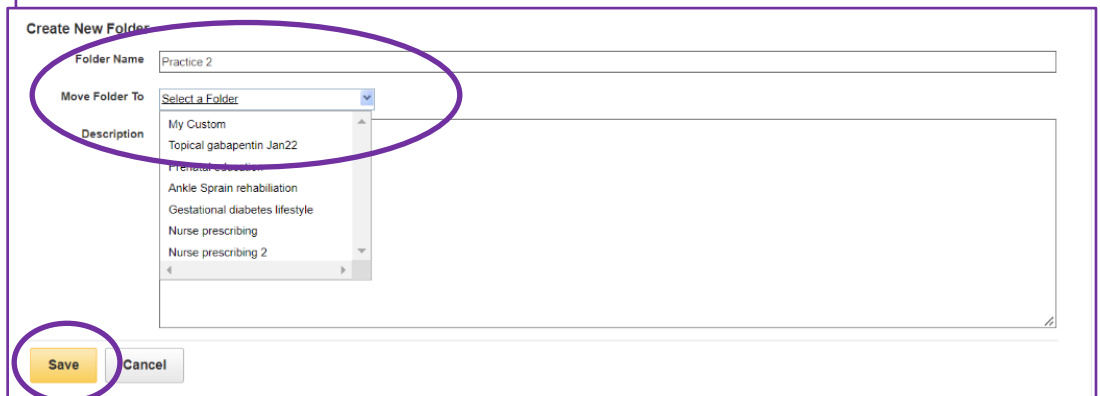
- Now you need to create your folder
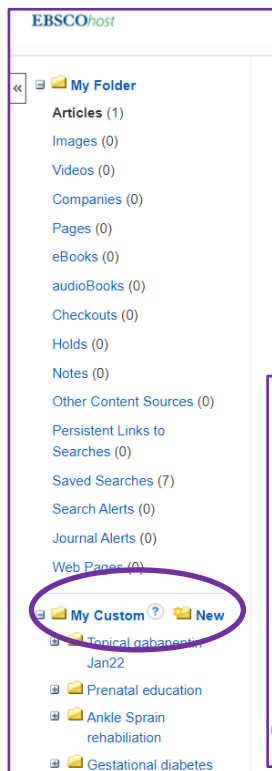
Scroll down the menu on the left of the page until you get to **My Custom** and then click on **New**

You will then be given the option to name your folder, give it a description and where to move it to – use **My Custom** (unless you want to create it as a sub folder of an existing folder you have already created)
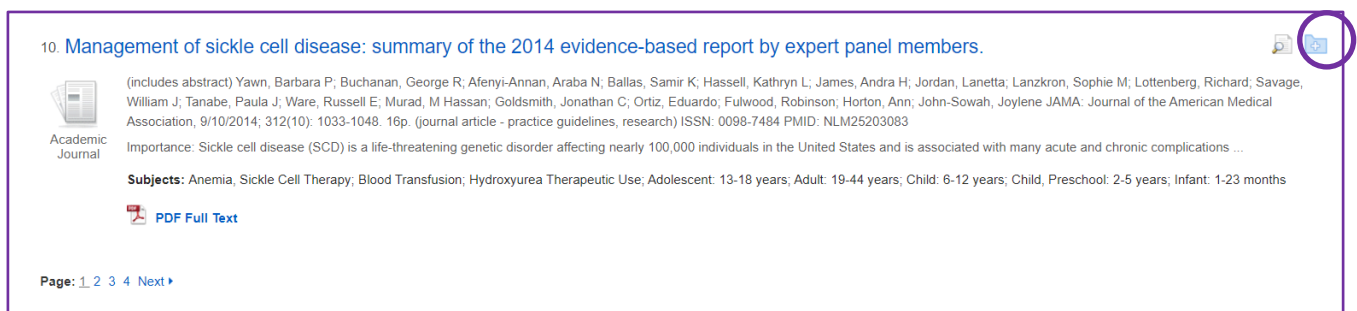
Then click **Save**

- Use the **Back** button to return to your search and results list.

- To save results, you can select the records that you are interested in by clicking on the **folder icon** to the right.

- Then select the **folder** you want to save the record to.

- If you have more than one page of results to look through, use the **Next** button at the bottom of the screen to move to the next page.

11.Exporting, Saving or Printing your Results

- Click on folder at the top of the screen to return to your folder page.

Scroll down the menu down the side until you get to **My Custom**. Click on the folder you want to export results from, and then click on **Articles.**

- Select the articles you want to export by clicking on the box to the left of the article title, or use the **Select/Deselect All** button if you want to export all the articles.

- You can now use the options on the right of the screen to print, save, email or export your results.

- If printing your results, you can choose the format you want the results to appear in.

12. Alerts

- When saving your search history you are given the option to save it as an **Alert**.

If you choose this option, you will then be able to set up an **Alert**. You can set up a schedule for the Alert, deciding how often you want it to run, how you would like the Alert to be delivered, and specify the email address you want the alert to be sent to (if you want to receive the alert via email).

13. Further resources

This workbook is designed to demonstrate and explain how to carry out a successful basic search using the EBSCOhost database. However, further resources are available if you wish to go into more detail about how EBSCOhost works or how to search for literature in general.

We have links to a number of guides and video tutorials on our website here: https://www.knowledge-nw.nhs.uk/evidence-searching

Framing your questions (PICO and other search strategies). The following websites look at search strategies in more detail.

- http://guides.nyu.edu/c.php?g=276561&p=1847897
- https://medhealth.leeds.ac.uk/info/639/information_specialists/1500/search_concept_tools

The Library and Knowledge Service also has a number of books available on how to carry out a literature search, including:

- *"Doing a Literature Review in Health and Social Care",* by H. Aveyard. Published by Open University Press (2014) ISBN: 9780335263073

If you would like any further help with EBSCOhost we can help provide training. Visit our website to request an Assisted Search session or contact us to arrange a group training session either in the library, at your location or virtually via MS Teams.

If you don't have time to carry out an evidence search for yourself (and the search isn't part of an assignment or coursework) we can carry out the search for you. To request an Evidence Search complete our online form here: https://www.knowledge-nw.nhs.uk/request-an-evidence-search