Literature Searching for Research

Research master class: finding the evidence - literature searching

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Purposes of literature searching

- Identify extent and quality of work already carried out in the subject area
- Identify key contacts
- Avoid duplication!
Types of literature: 1

Primary literature
- Preprints
- Conference proceedings
- Informally published reports ("grey literature")
- Journal articles
Types of literature: 2

Secondary literature

- Reviews
- Structured abstracts + comments
- Books: edited collections
- Books: monographs/surveys
Types of literature: 3

More on “grey literature”...

- Theses
- Reports
- Official publications (not Stationery Office)
- Conference proceedings
Sources for literature searching: 1

Databases of articles and books

*Bibliographic* e.g. MIDIRS, MEDLINE, etc.
*Full text* e.g. PsycArticles, Cochrane Database, WHO Reproductive Health Library

Library catalogues
(COPAC, British Library, RCM etc.)

Research databases
 e.g. National Research Register, HERO (UK), CRISP (USA)
Sources for literature searching: 2

...Not forgetting....

- Hand searching of core journals
- Reference lists / footnote chasing
- Printed bibliographies
- World wide web search engines (NB *not just* Google – see [www.philb.com](http://www.philb.com) for others)
- Picking colleagues’ brains (such as they are...
Bibliographic databases: 1

Maternity and Infant Care (MIC)

- Produced in UK by MIDIRS
- Comprehensive coverage of core subject literature
  - Journals
  - Conference proceedings
  - Grey literature
  - Book chapters
- Available via individual or institutional subscription
- ‘Advanced’ search features of individual version rather crude
- First resort!
Bibliographic databases: 2

Medline

- 4000+ journals indexed
- Produced by National Library of Medicine (USA)
- Available free at [http://www.pubmed.gov](http://www.pubmed.gov)
- European journals not particularly well covered
- Maternity services coverage is reasonable, but tends to be US-oriented
- Strong on acute medical specialities – good for ‘medical’ topics
Bibliographic databases: 3

Psychological Abstracts
(PsycINFO, PsycLIT, ClinPsyc-clinical subset)

- Produced by American Psychological Association
- A “cash cow”—but available free to NHS staff in England via National Core Content
- Covers all aspects of psychology
- Useful for psychological aspects of midwifery care
Bibliographic databases: 4

CINAHL

- Covers nursing, midwifery, PAMs, health management, health information
- Recent records include references
- US bias but increasingly strong coverage of UK and Australasian literature
- Available on National Core Content
- Good for midwifery and maternity services
- Some journals very obscure
Bibliographic databases: 5

AMED: Allied and Complementary Medicine

- Produced in UK by British Library
- Aims to complement MEDLINE
- Best source of UK PAMs literature
- on National Core Content
Bibliographic databases: 6

Cochrane Library

- Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews
- NHS Economic Evaluations Database
- DARE: Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effectiveness
- Medical editors’ trials amnesty
- HTA database
- Now free on the web in England via NLH
Bibliographic databases: 7

Citation indexes

- Identify a significant piece of published research
- Find out who has cited it in later work
  - SciSearch
  - Social SciSearch (includes nursing)
  - included in Web of Science
Bibliographic databases: 8

Others:

- ChildData (child health and welfare)
- ASSIA (applied social sciences)
- Social Care Online (social work)
- British Nursing Index – on NCC
- DH Data (health management) – on NCC
- King’s Fund (health management) – on NCC
Bibliographic databases: 9

...lots of web-accessible databases on specialist areas, e.g.:

- BiblioSleep: sleep
- PHEL: Public Health Electronic Library (NICE)
- Aegis AIDS-HIV
- NARIC: disability
- DrugScope: drug abuse
- CAMbase – complementary therapies
- Education-line: education
- SPIN: science policy
- ETOH: alcohol abuse
- POPLINE - population
- ERIC: education
Citation styles: 1

Harvard style – *social sciences*

Vancouver style – *biomedicine*
Citation styles: 2

Citing electronic sources

Styles less established than for citing printed formats--
--need to include:

 رسمي bibliographic details (as applicable): author, title, etc.

**URL**

**Date downloaded**

Research information: 1

- Research in progress
- Findings/outcomes
- Research funding and opportunities
Research information: 2

National Health Service R&D pages

Information on all aspects of NHS research: includes

National Research Register: ongoing and recently completed research projects funded by or of interest to the NHS [www.rdforum.nhs.uk/home.htm](http://www.rdforum.nhs.uk/home.htm)

Research Findings Electronic Register (ReFeR): findings of completed NHS research [www.refer.nhs.uk](http://www.refer.nhs.uk)

Health Technology Assessment (HTA) programme monographs [www.ncchta.org](http://www.ncchta.org)
Research information: 3

R&D Info
http://www.rdinfo.org.uk
A digest of health-related funding and training opportunities

Current Controlled Trials: mRCT
A register of randomised controlled trials currently in progress
http://www.controlled-trials.com

Virginia Henderson International Nursing Library
Registry of Nursing Research Database
An e-library of completed and ongoing research
Research information: 4

Medical research charities

Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC)
http://www.amrc.org.uk
Links to individual charities, funding guide
Research information: 5

Higher education

Research councils:
- Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)
- Medical Research Council (MRC)

HERO:
Information on research opportunities and funding within UK higher education
http://www.hero.ac.uk/uk/research/index.cfm
Further training: 1

Online resources

Lots at www.rcm.org.uk library pages, e.g.

- Literature searching for research (Bath)
  http://www.bath.ac.uk/health/rdsu/hints_search.htm

- Information retrieval skills for biological sciences (Leicester)
  http://www.le.ac.uk/li/sources/subject3/biol/ist/sources.html

- Intute online tutorials: nursing and midwifery
  http://www.vts.intute.ac.uk
Further training: 2

External training providers 1

- **CILIP**
  runs a variety of courses on information searching in health care
  (these were formerly provided by the British Library)
  [http://www.cilip.org.uk](http://www.cilip.org.uk)

- **BMA Library**
  runs workshops covering online searching, evidence-based healthcare, and critical appraisal skills
  [http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/content/LIBCoursesUpdate](http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/content/LIBCoursesUpdate)
Further training: 3

External training providers 2

EPPI-Centre (Institute of Education)
Provides cross-disciplinary training in systematic reviewing – focus is on social interventions
http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/