INTRODUCTION TO NHS EVIDENCE

www.evidence.nhs.uk

Introductory guide to searching

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**Background**

Evidence Search is a web based portal that provides free open access to a unique index of authoritative health and social care evidence-based information. Drawing on local, national and international sources it will simultaneously search over 300,000 resources from hundreds of trustworthy and accredited sources.

The sites searched by NICE Evidence Search are shown on the filters list. Information is made available either through a direct feed of data from the content provider to NICE, or by trawling relevant content on the source website.

NHS Evidence assesses all identified or suggested sources of information and recommendations are considered by the Evidence Services Strategy Group.

**What does NHS Evidence cover?**

**Evidence is identified across four domains:**
Medicines, Public Health, and Clinical and Social Care.

**Types of evidence include:**
care pathways, commissioning guides, drugs information, economic evaluations, effective practice examples, evidence uncertainties, evidence updates, guidance, health technology appraisals, lay information, learning materials, ongoing trials, patient and lay experience, policy, primary research, qualitative reviews, quality measures, randomised controlled trials, shared decision aids, support tools and systematic reviews.

**What is not included.**
- Sources which are predominantly written in a language other than English
- Statute
- Personal opinion or experience exclusively (for example blogs)
- Patient information that has not been awarded the DH Information Standard
- Content that has been archived by an evidence provider, apart from exceptional circumstances. (CINAHL, MEDLINE)
Searching
Choose your main search terms and enter them into the search box, e.g. asthma - as shown below. An 'intellisense' feature analyses text as it is typed in and provides shortcuts to relevant searches. NHS Evidence will automatically identify the main terms in your search and return results based on these.

The search can be used without logging in, and the full text of the search results – if available – is usually free to access.
NHS Evidence ranks results based on the relative hierarchy of evidence with Guidelines and Commissioning Guides being promoted above Primary Research articles for example. This means you are presented first with the best evidence available for your search.
Tips for searching:

**Boolean operators (AND, OR and NOT)**

By default the terms are combined with AND. For example a search for **bell’s palsy** will actually be performing the following search **bells AND palsy** and so will find documents containing both words wherever they occur.

You can use the OR operator to find alternative terms. For example, search for ("allergic rhinitis" OR hayfever OR "hay fever").

You can also narrow your search to exclude words by using the NOT operator, for example: NSAIDS **NOT** aspirin.

**Searching phrases**

To search for an exact phrase put quotation marks around it. For example, searching for “bell’s palsy” will return only those documents where that exact phrase appears.

**Wildcard (asterisk*)**

You can use a wildcard to find all variations of a word: for example **surg*** will find surg**eon**, surg**ery** and surg**ical**. If you don’t use the asterisk and search only on surg, you will only pick up resources that use the abbreviation surg.

Such as:

Note that ‘stemming’ (word variations – see below) is applied where appropriate so you do not have to use a wildcard to search for a plural form as well.

**Spelling**

As well as the standard English language dictionary, search terms will also be checked against a medical dictionary for accuracy. Should a term be slightly **misspelled** you will be offered suggestions for correct spelling.

**Word variations (stemming)**

When appropriate the search engine will automatically search for words that are similar to some or all of your search terms. For example, if you search for “strategies” the search engine will also search for related variations such as “strategy”. Any variants of your terms that were searched for will be highlighted in the snippet of text accompanying each result.

**Capitalisation**

Searches are not case sensitive. Therefore regardless of whether you use upper case, lower case or a combination of both the search engine will automatically search for all versions. This also applies to the Boolean operators.
Viewing and refining your results

The resources the search produces are listed by relevance, with an option to filter by Area of Interest, Type of Information, Sources, Medicine Names and Date.

When you run a search the Search Results page is displayed. The title of each result is a link to the article on the source site. Many articles also have a link called Read Summary which allows you to read an abstract before going to the full text. However, not all items are full text.
Filters

You can also extend or refine your search from the Search Results page. Use the results filters on the left hand side of the page to examine the numbers of results returned for different "Areas of interest", "Types of information", "Clinical queries", "Sources" or "Medicines". Clicking on an option narrows the search to display only the results which are assigned to the group you have selected. Select more filter options to limit results further.

To remove an individual filter, click on the X beside it. To remove all, click the X by “Clear all filters” at the bottom.
Saving your results

Select the icon at the top of the results and choose the medium which you would like the link to the results to be sent to you from the drop down menu.
Clinical Knowledge Summaries (CKS)

There is a direct link to CKS from the NHS Evidence homepage.
NICE Pathways

Select Nice Pathways on the home page.

From the Pathways menu, select the topic you are interested in. You can search alphabetically, by topic or by recent additions. Sort options are to the left and selections are to the right.
Once a topic is selected the pathway for it appears to the left of the page. Each step of this pathway is clickable and the left hand pane will display relevant information and policies for each step as you select it. When the pathways logo appears on a policy there will be a link to a further pathway for that information.

Clicking on a section will provide information on that part of the pathway, displaying relevant information down the side.
The tick symbol indicates that there is a quality standard attached at the bottom of the relevant information in the right pane. There are also resources and sources.

Guidance

Select Guidance on the homepage
Choose from the NICE Guidance, Advice and Collections options on the lefthand side of the large squares, or select the relevant category for guidance in your area as displayed in the blue boxes.

The NICE guidance can be organised by the month, as well as policies in development and those at the consultation stage.
The list will show the results, switch to the other options by clicking the tabs across the top of the box.

In every list there is a division between what is in development and what is published. The left hand bar options search based on the categories displayed there.
Select a category from this list, (or the blue boxes on the main menu) and then select the relevant options to narrow your search further.
Continue to narrow the options until you reach the final page of the topic you are looking for. This will list any new and updated information and all the relevant guidance and guidelines.
Standards and Indicators

Select the type of standards or indicators you wish to read more about

Select the full list of standards and topics, or more information about quality standards and uptake.
Selecting the full list of public health topics will give access to the quality standards topic library. The status and area of focus of each standard is listed.

Selecting the development option provides information on writing the standards.
The Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) tab contains information and links about the scheme which is voluntary for UK GP practices.

The Clinical Commissioning Group Outcomes Indicator Set (CCG OIS) tab contains information and links to help measure health improvement.
On any NICE areas (such as Pathways, Guidance and Standards and Indicators) there is a ribbon with links to News, About, Get Involved and Communities sections of the site.

The news tab contains current information about health relevant topics, select specific areas of news to target with the buttons in the top ribbon.

The about tab provides information about NICE, with links to further details.
The get involved tab provides information about contributing to NICE in different ways, with various links to further information.

The communities tab classifies NICE’s work into sections which are relevant to different user groups, selecting a user group which represents your interest will link to sections which should be of use.

We hope you found this guide useful. Please take a moment to complete this short survey to enable us to gather feedback:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/B2MN556

Thank you – Keyll Darree Library team

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