INTRODUCTION TO NHS EVIDENCE

www.evidence.nhs.uk

Introductory guide to searching

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Background
NHS Evidence is a service that provides access to authoritative health and social care evidence and best practice through a web-based portal. It is managed by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE). The aim is to help people across health, public health and social care sectors make better decisions by providing them with easy access to high quality evidence-based information. The service also engages directly with professionals and practitioners to identify and accredit evidence, and to support the uptake and use of evidence to improve practice and care.

What does NHS Evidence cover?
Evidence is identified across four domains, medicines, public health, 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
- QIPP examples
- qualitative reviews
- quality measures
- randomised controlled trials
- shared decision aids
- support tools
- systematic reviews

What is not included.
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Content that has been archived by an evidence provider, apart from exceptional circumstances.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

The search will be in many ways familiar to users of well-known internet search engines. 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 simple search gives a search result that lists resources by relevance, with an option to sort by date.
The search can be freely accessed without the need for logging in, and the full text of the search results can be also be freely obtained in most cases. NHS Evidence also 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 just put quotation marks around the phrase. For example, searching for "bell's palsy" will return only those documents where that exact phrase appears.

**Wildcard (asterisk*)**


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 normal English language dictionary search terms will also be checked against our 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**

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". Each option within the categories indicates how many results within your existing results set have been assigned to that category, and clicking on an option narrows the search to just display those results. You can click on any of these to limit your search to these results. You can also add other selections to limit your results still further.
To remove filters simply click on the X.

Saving your results

Follow the instructions to sign in.

A-Z of topics

Browsable topic pages highlight selected evidence for a particular topic and allow dynamic browsing of key related content. There are currently about 150 topics covered and these will be expanded in the future. From the home page scroll down to the bottom and click on A-Z topics.
You will find key information on your topic presented in tabs.

and a more comprehensive set of search results listed below it.
QIPP (Quality, Innovation, productivity and Prevention)

Access from the main page.

QIPP is aimed at improving quality and productivity across the NHS and social care. The QIPP collection on NHS Evidence brings together information about local initiatives information from the Cochrane Library that could be used as the basis of further initiatives.

You can register with NHS Evidence and start to save your searches and create alerts.
There is also a direct link to Clinical Knowledge Summaries from the NHS Evidence website.