Royal College of Nursing library and heritage services

Introduction to using the CINAHL database: step-by-step guide
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Introduction to using the CINAHL database

CINAHL is the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature. It contains references to articles from hundreds of nursing journals from the UK, USA and other countries, and links to thousands of full text journal articles. Not everything is available in full text online.

It is available to RCN members from the Royal College of Nursing library and heritage services web pages: www.rcn.org.uk/library. You will need to enter your RCN membership number and surname.

Searching using keywords

Search using keywords rather than typing in a sentence.

It is worth spending a few moments thinking about the words that are most important and relevant to your search topic. For instance, if you want to find information about ‘the effect of nutrition on wound healing’ the highlighted words are your keywords.

• Type your first keyword in the box e.g. nutrition.
• Click on Search.
• The number of results found by your search is displayed.
• Repeat this process to search for any further keywords e.g. wound healing.
Search tips

The truncation symbol is an asterisk*. It allows you to broaden your search by picking up all of the possible endings for a word. To truncate a word put an asterisk after the stem of the word. For example, to search for ‘nutrition’ or ‘nutritional’ type in nutrition*.

It is also possible to search CINAHL using subject headings. To find out more about this view the EBSCO tutorial ‘Using CINAHL/MESH Headings’ which is available as an Adobe flash video at http://tinyurl.com/2uuydc6

Search results

Your search history is displayed below the search box:

- Each search is numbered (Search ID#).
- The column Search Terms shows the search terms you have entered.
- The column Actions shows the number of results found for each search.
- Click on View Results to view the results of a search.
Combining searches with ‘AND’

Searches can be combined using the word AND, helping you to find more specific references. An AND search will narrow your search. It will find references containing both the terms you have selected. Using this command will reduce the number of references found.

For example, to find references containing both the terms nutrition and wound healing:

- Select the tick boxes next to the searches you want to combine.
- Select the Search with AND button.
- The number of results found by the combined search is displayed.
Refine your results

You can refine your search results to find articles available in full text. You can also refine results by publication date.

- View the results of your search.
- Use the Limit To options.

- To limit to articles available either online or in print from an RCN Library select Full Text.
- To limit to research articles select Research Article.
- To limit by publication year use the date slider.
- You can refine your results further by selecting Show More. Options available include the journal subset ‘UK & Ireland’ which limits to journals published in these countries. Please be aware that limiting research articles to those published in the UK & Ireland will not necessarily identify research conducted in these countries.
**Viewing results**

A maximum of ten records are displayed on a page. If there are more than ten records go to the next page to view the next ten.

Records in CINAHL include the following information: title, author, and journal details.

Many records also include an abstract (summary). To see this move your mouse over the preview button.

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**Accessing full text**

If an article is in full text on CINAHL there will be a link to PDF Full Text or HTML Full Text.

Alternatively the record may include a message saying Check LinkSource for the full text. Use this link to check if the article is available from another website or in print at an RCN Library.

Once you select this link you will be asked to log in using the username: rcnlibrary password: nursing

When you open the full text of an online article you can print, save or email a copy to yourself.

If an article is available in print from an RCN Library you can request a photocopy. We offer self service and postal photocopying services (charges apply).

If article is not available online or from an RCN Library we can request a copy from another library on your behalf (charges apply).
Saving results

You can print, save, email or export results from CINAHL using the Folder. This enables you to keep a list of references. You can also use it to keep a record of your search history.

- Click on the folder icon to add references to the folder. The icon will then turn yellow.

Once you have selected all the references you wish to keep go to the folder. There is a link to this at the top of every page.

- From the folder you can print, email, save or export your references. If you print, email or save you can include your search history.
- If you choose to email you can also send the full text of any articles available on CINAHL as PDFs or HTML Full Text.
- If you are using reference management software select ‘Export' to export the references in a compatible format.

Help

For further help select the Help button within CINAHL. There is a link at the top of every page.

If you have any questions please contact us and one of our team of information professionals will be happy to help.

Contact us

Telephone: 0345 337 3368    Email: rcn.library@rcn.org.uk
Webchat: www.rcn.org.uk/virtual_enquiry

Screenshots from CINAHL are used with permission of EBSCO Information Services
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