

Evidence-Based Medicine (EBM) Search Strategies

This tool was created by the FPIN librarian community. The recommended order of searching is outlined in HDA Document #106 *Conducting a Smart Search*: 1. TRIP Database [Trip Database](#), 2. FPIN Search <http://www.fpin.org/search>, 3. Other Fee-based Databases. If these are not sufficient, move on to Medline or Ovid, using these search suggestions.

Medline Searching in PubMed or OVID

The search tips below are meant as aids for helping you focus a set of search results toward **evidence-based** citations. We recommend that you always consider contacting your local FPIN librarian, who is trained as a search expert, for additional evidence-based search assistance.

1. Focus your clinical question using PICO (Patient/Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome). Formulation of a good clinical question is a fundamental part of EBM searching since it keeps your search narrowly focused and patient-centered. Using PICO also helps you recognize what kind of a question you are asking and facilitates the creation of a good search strategy.
2. Truncate words to pick up variant endings.

For example in PubMed, metaanaly* for metaanalysis or probabil* for probability/probabilities. (truncation symbol in PubMed is *; \$ in OVID)
3. Type in all variations of a word.

For example in PubMed, metaanalys*, meta analys*, or meta-analys*
4. To find clinically relevant articles in Medline, limit your search appropriately to get to the evidence:
 - a. Limit to Publication Types: Meta-analysis, Practice Guideline, Consensus Development Conference, and Randomized Controlled Trials. To find Systematic Reviews, click on **Review** as a limit under **Publication Type** and look for “systematic” in the title or abstract.
 - b. Use ‘specificity’ as a textword in diagnosis searches.
 - c. Limit using MeSH terms including: Treatment Outcome, (includes Treatment Failure); Prognosis; or Sensitivity and Specificity (for diagnostic topics).
 - d. Use *Clinical Queries* to limit your search to the evidence. *Clinical Queries* are located under *Additional Limits* in OVID and on the left hand frame of PubMed.
5. Less is more--the more words you include in a search statement, the lower the number of results you will get. Start with two or three concept terms.