Locating Randomized Controlled Trials, Cohort Studies, & Case Control Studies

This guide assumes familiarity with the databases Medline and CINAHL, and knowledge of subject searching. If you would like a review of searching these databases and subject searching, please see the PICO Searching and Advanced Searching tutorials at: http://guides.purduecal.edu/Nurs498

A review of the content of an article is the best way to determine if it is a randomized controlled trial (RCT), Cohort Study, or Case Control Study. Look for the article heading “Method” when reviewing the article to ascertain this information.

There are methods of searching databases to assist you in retrieving specific types of research articles, as not all articles will state the research method in the title.

**Randomized Controlled Trials**

In CINAHL, there are ways to limit your search to randomized controlled trials. In the Advanced Search tab, scroll down the page to view the features under the header “Limit Your Results” where you will see a box you can check for Randomized Controlled Trials. You can also select RCT under the “Publication Type” drop down menu. You can check the box or select from the menu.
The abstract of an article is another useful way of determining whether an article is a RCT. In CINAHL, the publication type is indicated near the top of the abstract record. After clicking on a title in your results, you can look for the “Publication Type.”

**Medline (EBSCO)**

When searching in Medline (EBSCO), there is a drop down menu in the Advanced Search tab available to select RCT, similar to how the screen appears in CINAHL with Full-Text. However, there is no RCT box to check.

**Medline (OVID)**

In Medline (OVID), you also have the option of limiting your search results to RCT in the “Publication Types” menu as demonstrated below.
Cohort Studies

There is no option in CINAHL and MEDLINE to limit your results exclusively to Cohort Studies. There are ways you can incorporate search terms to assist you in locating these studies.

CINAHL

In CINAHL, the CINAHL heading for cohort studies is “prospective studies.” If you explode this heading, your search term will be: (MH "Prospective Studies+”). “MH” is the abbreviation for exact CINAHL Headings. You can add this to your key terms that you have identified in your search strategy.

Medline (EBSCO)

In Medline, there is a subject heading for cohort studies. In the Ebsco interface, you can search (MH "Cohort Studies") and connect this with your other terms.

Medline (OVID)

When searching Medline in the OVID interface, you can enter: exp Cohort Studies/ and connect this heading with the remainder of your terms.

Case Control Studies

CINAHL

In CINAHL, the CINAHL heading for case-control studies is “Case Control Studies.” If you explode this heading, your search term will be: “(MH "Case Control Studies+”). You can add this to your key terms that you have identified in your search strategy.

Medline (EBSCO)

When searching in Medline in the Ebsco interface, you can enter: (MH "Case-Control Studies") and combine this with the Boolean Operator “AND” with your other search terms.

Medline (OVID)

When searching Medline in the OVID interface, you can enter: exp Cohort Studies/ and combine this with the Boolean Operator “AND” with your other search terms.

For in-depth research assistance, set up an appointment with Lynda Schoop, Reference Librarian and Nursing Subject Specialist. Lynda.Schoop@purduecal.edu or 219/989-2249.