

Some Useful Tips about Searching the Literature

A key component of the Critical Thinking in Health Care course is the concept of problem-based learning. We are trying to teach you general thinking skills, and do so in the context of specific problems we provide you. In the course of your work in the course, you will identify “learning issues”, which are topics you need to find out more about by consulting reference and literature sources.

The most reliable and useful information comes from sources that have been “peer reviewed”. What this means is that the work has been reviewed by experts to determine whether the methodology used to generate the results and findings (data) is sound, whether the data analysis has been appropriate, and whether the article makes a meaningful contribution to the literature. It is important to recognize that **MOST INFORMATION FOUND ON THE INTERNET HAS NOT BEEN PEER-REVIEWED**. Some of it may be valuable and useful, but some of it may be totally inaccurate and made up by a person who forgot to take their medications last night. You should institute safeguards to insure that the information you are generating to solve the problems in this class is legitimate, accurate, and up to date. The best source of information is via peer-reviewed articles and books, NOT from Googled webpages. You can generally place more trust in a webpage that is sponsored by a reputable national organization or institution than you can in a page that has been posted by an individual. Some general tips for evaluating webpages can be found on the course website and include the following URL’s:

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Evaluate.html>

<http://info.wlu.ca/~wwwlib/libguides/internet/eval.html>

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Evaluation.html>

Useful Databases

Normally, you should spend most of your time searching available databases for information that will resolve your learning issues. You should explore these sites and follow some of the tutorials listed below to become more familiar and skilled at literature searching. You can access the Health Science Center library databases at

<http://www.library.health.ufl.edu.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/resources/index.htm>

At that site, the most useful databases are:

PubMed, where you can access thousands of peer-reviewed articles in the health disciplines. PubMed can be a very powerful tool if you use it correctly. The goal is to find information that is specifically relevant to the question confronting you without also locating thousands of irrelevant information. Doing this often requires the use of

PubMed search terms and Boolean operators. Fortunately, there's lots of information on how to do this stuff on the Health Science Center website URL above.

To get a quick tutorial on PubMed Basics, go to:

<http://www.library.health.ufl.edu.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/help/PubMed/PubMedBasics.doc>

To get a quick tutorial on more advanced PubMed features, go to:

<http://www.library.health.ufl.edu.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/help/PubMed/PubmedBBasics.doc>

Clinical Pharmacology, which contains useful information about drugs, their indications and mechanisms of action, their side effects, etc. Basis information on how to navigate this website can be found at:

http://www.library.health.ufl.edu.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/web/Rae/clinPharm_1pager.doc

PsychInfo, where you can access information about behavioral treatments, psychological disorders, assessment and management of behavioral and mental health conditions, etc. Information on how to use this site effectively can be found at:

<<http://www.library.health.ufl.edu.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/web/peggy/PsycINFOEBSCO-0403-PH.doc>>

Evidence-Based and Cochrane, where you can access many evidence-based medicine (EBM) resources, including high quality systematic reviews of the state of the art in diagnosis, treatment, and management of medical and behavioral conditions. These reviews are often very valuable because they contain in one place a quantitative review of all of the studies that have been done on a topic. A general tutorial on accessing EBM resources is located at:

<http://www.library.health.ufl.edu.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/web/linda/EBMR4-26-04_lb.doc>

The most useful resources are:

[Evidence Based Medicine Reviews: ACP Journal Club](#) (mostly individual articles are reviewed here)

[Evidence Based Medicine Reviews: Cochrane Database](#) (here's where the best systematic reviews are located)

[Evidence Based Medicine Reviews: Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effectiveness \(DARE\)](#); this database contains brief reviews of the effectiveness of treatments

[Evidence Based Medicine Reviews: Cochrane Controlled Trials Register](#) (a register of completed and in-progress clinical trials)