Translating textword strings for systematic reviews

A streamlined process for accurately translating your final search strategy from Medline to other databases

Copy and print the search history box from Medline/PsycINFO into a Word document as a table

Copy and paste the Medline textword search lines below this, keeping the concept lines separate.

- Remove .tw.
- Add double quotes around phrases (two words or more)
- Globally change lowercase ‘or’ to uppercase ‘OR’
- Make 3 copies of this

CINAHL copy
- Change adjacency (adjx) to Nx
- Change ? to #
  Note: Do not use # as an internal wildcard if also using end truncation. Write out variations instead, e.g. gynaecolog* OR gynecolog*

Search String Master copy
- Combine each concept search string with an uppercase AND
- Check brackets balance
- Look for extra spaces between words

Scopus copy
- Change adjacency to W/x
- Change ? wildcards to *
- Spell out single character end truncation (?) – e.g. memo, memos
  Note: Scopus automatically searches for plurals

Web of Science
- Change adjacency (adjx) to NEAR/x
- Change wildcard ? to $

ProQuest and Cochrane
- Replace $ with * - unless $ indicates single character end truncation. In this case, spell out truncation.

PubMed
- Replace adjacency (adjx) with uppercase AND
- Spell out any words with wildcards (e.g. tumour* OR tumor*)
- Use ‘Replace’ function to change OR to OR[tiab]
- Add brackets around whole string, then add NOT medline[sb] to the end of string

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Translating in action: entering the searches in databases

CINAHL

1. Find and search on subject headings for the first concept. CINAHL, like Medline, maps to the closest subject heading.
2. Enter the first concept textword search string in both the first and second search lines
3. Choose TI Title from the drop down menu at right (“Select a Field”) for the first line, and AB Abstract for the second
4. Change Boolean operator to OR (drop down box) and run the search
5. Combine the subject heading search set with the textword search set using OR
6. Repeat this for each concept search string.

Scopus

1. Uncheck the irrelevant subject areas (e.g. Physical Sciences)
2. Put each concept search string on a separate line combining each with AND using drop down menu at LHS. Note: If one OR more of your concept strings are too long for their line, you must search each concept separately, splitting long ones across lines and combining with OR. Once each concept has been searched, combine search sets with AND using the Combine Queries search box.

ProQuest

1. Once in ProQuest, click on Databases tab and choose relevant subject areas for the search, e.g. Health and Medicine databases
2. Use Advanced Search option
3. Copy search string into search box
4. Change Anywhere option (right drop down menu) to Anywhere except full text (too sensitive)

5. Consider also limiting to ‘peer reviewed’ articles, dissertations & theses, conference papers (i.e. eliminate trade journals and magazines etc.)

Web of Science

1. Choose relevant subsets from under “More Settings” (i.e. consider removing Arts & Humanities Citation Index, Index Chemicus etc.)

2. Decide whether to include “All databases” OR just “Web of Science Core Collection”. The “All databases” option will include Medline so you will have lots of duplicates. It will also include Scielo (open access journals from Latin American, the Caribbean, Spain, Portugal, and
South Africa).

3. Choose Topic in search screen dropdown box

4. If you are getting too many irrelevant results, exclude categories such as Zoology.

PubMed

1. Copy search string into search box

2. If you have used truncation, check for ‘wildcard’ warnings. PubMed only searches the first 600 variations on a word stem then stops searching. Check ‘Search Details’ box to make sure your search terms have been included. If not, spell out truncation.

![Web of Science Categories]

Wildcard search for ‘run’ used only the first 600 variations. Lengthen the root word to search for all endings.

An example of this is therap*. PubMed finds therapies and therapeutic but stops searching before reaching therapy.

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