



# Scoping the literature for your research bid

## Unit 2



## Unit 2

In this unit we will cover:

- What are the major health databases?
- How do we choose which databases to search?

# Reminder – why you are scoping the literature (1)

- Research proposals need to be based on evidence that the research is necessary and has not already been done
- If you are unsure of what research you want to do, scoping the literature can help you identify ‘gaps’ in the research literature

## Reminder – why you are scoping the literature (2)

- Scoping the literature can help you identify research studies that have used a similar research design and these can help you to develop your research protocol and prepare your bid for funding
- For secondary research such as systematic reviews you will need to search the literature as part of your research methodology so conducting a scoping search can help you both to identify what research is out there on which to base your review and to justify your review

# Where do you start?

- Usually with an established health database such as :
  - MEDLINE
  - CINAHL (Nursing and Allied Health literature)
- And the Cochrane Library
  - for therapy/diagnosis questions and for RCTs and systematic reviews

# Sources

- Start with:
  - Established health databases that you are familiar with
- Then try:
  - Innovative evidence-based databases such as Cochrane
- Also consider:
  - Subject specific databases
  - Grey Literature
  - Internet sites
  - Ongoing research
  - Organisations

# Established health databases

- MEDLINE
  - covers Medicine, Nursing, Dentistry, Allied health and Pre- clinical sciences and has excellent coverage of US Journals. Contains over 16 million references to papers from 4,600 medical journals
- CINAHL
  - contains references to almost all English-language publications relevant to nursing and allied health. It has abstracts for papers from 800 journals and over 7000 full- text references
- EMBASE
  - similar to Medline but has an emphasis on drugs and pharmacology and has better coverage of European publications. It has references from over 3,500 journals and also has some references to books and conference proceedings

# Innovative databases based on research- derived evidence (1)

- Cochrane Library
- The Cochrane Library is not ONE database but SEVERAL including:
  - The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (CDSR)
  - The Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effectiveness (DARE)
  - The Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL)



# Innovative databases based on research-derived evidence (2)

- The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (CDSR) is a database of systematic reviews of healthcare interventions
- Systematic reviews look at high quality clinical trials and provide an overall single estimate of the results
- Systematic reviews are also a good source of references
- The Appendix may provide useful search terms for your own search

## Innovative databases based on research-derived evidence (3)

- Database of Abstracts of reviews of effects (DARE) is a database of systematic reviews that have NOT been conducted by the Cochrane organisation but have been published in the journal literature- there is no full text but an abstract and a critical commentary for each review is provided.
- CENTRAL is a database of clinical trials- so an excellent source if you are planning to do a systematic review and need to identify relevant clinical trials and RCTs.

# Established v Innovative

## Established

- Familiar
- Comprehensive
- Sophisticated
- Retrospective

## Innovative

- Selective
- Rigorous
- Evaluative
- Accessible

# Subject specific databases

- Some Examples:-
  - PsycInfo (Behavioural science & mental health)
  - British Nursing Index (Nursing)
  - AMED (Allied & alternative medicine)
  - ASSIA (Social Sciences)
  - British Education Index (Education)
  - Chemical Abstracts online (Chemical & Biochemical)

# Grey Literature

- HMIC (Health Management Information Consortium)  
<https://library.nhs.uk/knowledgehub/> - this is a database produced jointly by the King's Fund and the UK Department of Health and contains references to health and social care management literature including journal articles, conference proceedings, grey literature and policy documents.
- Open Grey – now decommissioned, but still available. Coverage is best for the period 1980-2005. The Archive for OpenGrey material can also be found on the Dutch national centre of expertise and repository for research data:  
<https://ssh.datastations.nl/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.17026/dans-xtf-47w5>

## Grey Literature (2)

- Alternatively use **Google Scholar**: <https://scholar.google.com/>  
Searching TIP - use site:nhs.uk – to restrict search

For example, typing: **site:.nhs.uk “health literacy”** into Google’s search bar will retrieve just results where:

- the phrase “health literacy” is used within
  - websites with URLs end with “.nhs.uk”
- Also search with site:.org.uk for charities and non-profit organisations in the UK.

# What is available to you?

- If you are working in the NHS
  - You will have access to the NHS Knowledge and Library Hub collection including Medline, CINAHL, EMBASE, PsycINFO, HMIC, etc
  - Databases freely available on the internet such as Cochrane and OpenSIGLE
- If you are doing a university course
  - The institution will have access to a range of databases which you can access
- If you are a member of a professional body
  - You may be able to access subject specific databases

# NHS access to databases: Knowledge and Library Hub



You need an NHS Athens username and password to access these resources

<https://library.nhs.uk/knowledgehub/>



# NHS access databases (1)

<https://library.nhs.uk/knowledgehub/>

## Logging in with your NHS Athens id

- Choose Healthcare databases advanced search from Journal and Databases page
- **AMED 1985-** (Allied and complementary medicine)  
Covers occupational therapy, physiotherapy, rehabilitation, plus alternative and complementary medicine: acupuncture, chiropractic, homeopathy, yoga, hypnosis.
- **BNI 1992-** (British Nursing Index)  
This UK focused database covers general nursing as well as the specific nursing areas.
- **CINAHL 1981-** (Cumulative Index of Nursing & Allied Health)  
A US database covering all aspects of nursing and allied health.

# NHS access databases (2)

<https://library.nhs.uk/knowledgehub/>

- **EMBASE 1980-**

- With particular emphasis on European sources, this database covers the whole field of medicine. Drugs, pharmacology and substance abuse are particularly well covered.

- **HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE 1922-**

- Health Business Elite contains full text content from 480 journals, detailing all aspects of health care administration and other non-clinical aspects of health care institution management.

- **HMIC Health Management Information Consortium 1979-** This compiles data from both the Department of Health Library and Information Services and Kings Fund Information and Library Service.

# NHS access databases (3)

<https://library.nhs.uk/knowledgehub/>

- **MEDLINE 1946-** This is a large US database of international medical literature. Other subjects include dentistry, veterinary medicine, medical psychology, genetics and advanced nursing practice.
- **PsycINFO 1806-**  
Includes international coverage of literature on Psychology and allied fields

## Brief Activity: 2

- Using the research question you devised in Unit 1:-
  - Decide which established databases you should search
  - Which innovative databases (if any)
  - Which subject specific databases (if any)