Using Electronic Resources: The Cochrane Library

Workbook for the Department of Health Sciences
Contents

1. Content of The Cochrane Library ................................................................. 2
2. Accessing The Cochrane Library ................................................................. 2
3. Browsing the database and displaying records ........................................... 3
4. Basic searching .......................................................................................... 4
5. Search results ............................................................................................ 4
6. Truncation ................................................................................................... 5
7. Combining terms ......................................................................................... 6
8. Combining search sets ................................................................................ 6
9. Saving your search results ......................................................................... 8
10. More information and help ....................................................................... 8
11. Exiting from The Cochrane Library .......................................................... 8
1. **Content of The Cochrane Library**

The Cochrane Library presents the work of the Cochrane Collaboration and others interested in assembling the best possible evidence on the effects of health care. It is made up of a number of databases including The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (Cochrane Reviews), the Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effectiveness (Other Reviews) and the Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials/CENTRAL (Clinical Trials).

The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews is updated continuously, CENTRAL and About the Cochrane Collaboration (Cochrane Groups) are updated monthly. The other databases are updated quarterly. The Cochrane Methodology Register was last updated in July 2012 and will not change until the future of this database has been reviewed.

2. **Accessing The Cochrane Library**

The Library’s main collection of bibliographic databases, including The Cochrane Library, is available via the E-resources Guide.

From your Personal homepage, click on Library Catalogue.

Note: If you are not working on a University IT Services computer and your Personal homepage is not automatically displayed, navigate to it by clicking on Current students from the University of York homepage (www.york.ac.uk).

On the Library Catalogue page click on E-resources Guide.

The guide will open in a new window.

Choose Health Sciences and Nursing from the Subject list.

Note: You can also access The Cochrane Library from the Health Sciences Subject Guide. Choose the Search the Literature tab.

Scan down the list of resources. Click on Cochrane Library (Wiley). The Cochrane Library will then open in a new window.
3. Browsing the database and displaying records

When you first open The Cochrane Library, the homepage is displayed:

You can search The Cochrane Library by entering your search terms here.

You can browse the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews by selecting a topic from the list or using the Other Browse Options.

Further options are listed lower down the screen.

To browse the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews by topic, select a topic from the menu.

To view the full list of topics, click on expand.

Click on a topic of interest to you. Click on appropriate sub-categories until a list of reviews is displayed. You should see a screen similar to that below:

COCHRANE REVIEWS: INFECTION CONTROL

- Complete microbial decontamination for skin preparation prior to surgery
- Cresolines for the prevention of surgical site infection
- Infection control strategies for preventing the transmission of meticillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) in nursing homes for older people

Click on one of the titles to go to the complete review. The abstract of the review will be displayed. To view the full text, click on View Full Article (HTML).

The “Jump to...” drop down menus allow you to go straight to the section of the review you want. Jump to Author’s Conclusions to see what has been concluded about the review. Note that you can also display the review as a pdf.
Click on the Cochrane Library logo (top left of the screen) to return to The Cochrane Library home page.

Note that there are a number of other ways that you can browse the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (see Other Browse Options). The A-Z: all Protocols and Reviews includes both completed reviews (Review) and protocols (reviews in progress Protocol).

If you have time, you can browse documents in the other sections of The Cochrane Library to compare the contents of each of the databases. To browse other databases in The Cochrane Library, select one of the options from the Browse Other Resources menu (below the Browse Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews menu). Note: The Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials can only be searched; there is no option that allows you to browse this database.

4. Basic searching

As well as browsing, it is also possible to search The Cochrane Library.

Type schizophrenia into the SEARCH THE COCHRANE LIBRARY search box ensuring that Title, Abstract or Keywords has been selected from the drop-down menu and click on Go.

This search will find all records within The Cochrane Library where the word schizophrenia appears in the title, abstract or keywords.

5. Search results

Under Search Results, the number of results found is listed next to the database in which they appear. The initial display (default display) will always show the results in Cochrane Reviews.

Note: it is important that you pay attention to the list noting the number of results found because if there are no results found in the Cochrane Reviews database the initial display will show by default the results from the next database from the list that contains any matches to your search.

In the example below, you can see that the word schizophrenia has been found 206 times out of a total of 7,481 records in the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews and in 185 records in Other Reviews.
The default display is the Cochrane Reviews database. In this example, 206 Cochrane Reviews records have been found.

To view the abstract of a review, click on its title – this opens a new window. To return to the results, close or minimise the article window. Click on **View: 26–50** at the top or the bottom of the page to view the titles of the next 25 reviews.

**Tip:** If you only want to look at complete reviews rather than protocols (reviews in progress) then select **Review** from the list on the left.

How many hits are found for this search in the **Trials** database? ..........................................

Please note that the first 3 resources are arranged as a hierarchy of evidence. When you do a search first look to see whether there is a Cochrane Review, if there isn’t then check Other Reviews for any other systematic reviews. If there is nothing in Other Reviews, then look in **Trials** to see if any trials have been conducted.

**6. Truncation**

The * symbol is used as a truncation symbol in The Cochrane Library. For example, **schizophrenia** will retrieve the terms schizophrenia, schizophrenic etc.

Search for **schizophrenia**

How many hits are found for this search in the **Trials** database? ..........................................

How does this compare with the number found in your first search for schizophrenia?

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7. **Combining terms**

You can combine terms within a search using a variety of operators.

- **AND** both words must appear in the record (e.g. diabetes and nursing)
- **OR** either word appears (e.g. teenage* or adolescen*)
- **NEAR** the second word must occur within 6 words either side of the first word (e.g. cognitive near therapy*)
- **NEXT** use for phrases (e.g. primary next care)
- **NOT** records including the second term will be excluded (USE WITH CARE)

Type **schizophren* and cognitive therapy** into the **SEARCH** box and click on **Go**.

How many hits are there in **Trials** for records which contain both of these two terms?

Who is the first author of the **Cochrane Review** entitled “Cognitive rehabilitation for people with schizophrenia and related conditions”?

8. **Combining search sets**

This example uses a more complex search to find information on the use of hypnotherapy or acupuncture to aid smoking cessation.

We will carry out searches on each aspect of the topic:

Conduct a search for **hypnotherapy or acupuncture**

On the results page click **Add to Search Manager** (beneath the Go button). This will store the information gathered in this search.

Now do the same for **smoking cessation** (don't forget to add the results to Search Manager).
Using the Search Manager option allows you to build up more complex queries step by step. You can reuse existing search sets by typing in the ID number e.g. #1 in the Search For: box and combining with other search terms as in the following example.

Click on **Search Manager**. A screen similar to the following will appear:

Type in the ID number for the **hypnotherapy or acupuncture** search (#1) in the **next search box** and combine it with the set number for the **smoking cessation** search (#2) using **and** (e.g. **#1 and #2**). Click on **Go**.

This search should find records containing either hypnotherapy or acupuncture in combination with smoking cessation.

You should see a screen similar to that below:

To view the results of the combined search click on the number at the end of the row.

Write down the title of one of the records from Other Reviews:

Note: This option can provide a useful alternative means of specifying more complex searches. You may wish to explore the search options that this provides.

You can also search via **Medical Term (MeSH)** (see the Medical Terms (MeSH) tab). MeSH searching allows you to search easily for medical concepts using a single term, without having to enter large lists of synonyms for that concept.
9. Saving your search results

It is possible to export the bibliographic details of records in The Cochrane Library.

To export chosen citations from a search, first select records by clicking in the check box next to them. To select all citations on a page, click Select All (at the top of the list of search results). To export selected citations, click Export selected. To export all search results within a database, click on Export all.

You will be prompted to choose your Export Type (PC, Macintosh, or Unix or Linux) and File Type (either Citation Only or Citation and Abstract), then click on Export Citation. Click on Save to save the file, and choose a filename.

10. More information and help

Click on Learn from the homepage to find out more about The Cochrane Library and how to use it. Click on Help on the homepage to access the online search manual. Search tips are also provided within Advanced Search.

11. Exiting from The Cochrane Library

When you have finished searching, close The Cochrane Library window.