Exercise 2: Keywords and subject terms

Purpose:

Many citation databases organize content, such as articles, by terms that describe the essence of a document. Identifying, combining, and using subject terms and keywords are essential to discovering and accessing information relevant to your clinical and research questions. This exercise will allow you to practice the process of identifying keywords and subject terms related to your information needs.

Learning Objective:

Students will illustrate the process and use of appropriate tools to generate keywords and subject terms for the needed information.

Estimated Time:

25 minutes

How-To:

For this activity, you'll be working with the answerable question you developed in Exercise 1. When planning a database search, you will need to break your research question down into its key concepts. As we discussed in the session with the OHSU librarians, you may find a framework such as PICO helpful for this task. Let's get started with the worksheet!

Step 1: Go to the worksheet and enter the answerable question you developed in Exercise 1.

Step 2: Briefly describe the concepts central to your research question. You may find PICO and other question frameworks helpful for this task.

Step 3: Brainstorm keywords to describe each concept. For this step, it will be helpful to think about the variety of regular words and phrases used to refer to the same or similar concept (e.g., cancer, carcinoma, malignancy, tumor, neoplasm, etc.).

Step 4: Search the MeSH database to identify subject terms that describe each concept. As with keywords, multiple subject terms may be relevant to the concept.

Bonus step: Subheadings allow you to focus on a particular aspect of a concept. For example, you might be interested in how a disease is diagnosed. Enter the MeSH subheadings that best qualify the significant concepts related to your question.

Submit your completed worksheet in LabSpot.

How We Will Assess Your Learning:

- We will evaluate if you are demonstrating the knowledge to identify the main concepts in a question (5 points).
- We will also assess if you are illustrating the ability to generate keywords and MeSH terms relevant to the main concepts in your question (5 points)