ALT-HEALTH WATCH

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DATABASE

Alt-Health Watch focuses on the many perspectives of complementary, holistic and integrated approaches to health care and wellness. It offers public, university, and medical libraries an immediate resource of nearly 50,000 articles from over 160 international, peer-reviewed and professional journals, magazines, reports, proceedings, and association and consumer newsletters (most from 1990 to the present), plus hundreds of pamphlets, booklets, special reports, original research and book excerpts. In addition to the standard bibliographic citations, the database indexes each article by more than 225 subject categories, 16 article types and 11 publication types. From both a professional and consumer standpoint, Alt-Health Watch provides in-depth coverage across the full spectrum of subject areas covered by “Alternative Medicine.”

ACCESS TO THE DATABASE

You must first go to the Health Professions Division Library homepage. The URL or electronic address for the HPD Library homepage is www.nova.edu/cwis/hpdlibrary. Here below, you can see what it looks like.

Click on the text “NSU Electronic Databases.” See the arrow above. You will be taken to the page that you see below. Click on “All Databases.” The other choice, “Medical & Health,” generates a list of databases each with a paragraph describing its contents and use. You might need to look at this page at first, when you are just beginning to acquaint yourself with the NSU system and the various databases available, but soon you will find “All Databases” to be much more convenient, especially after you can associate a particular database with the vendor that supplies that database to NSU.
The choice “All Databases” creates a grid on which you will see the names of the “Providers/Vendors” of the databases to which Nova Southeastern University subscribes. Below, the arrow is pointing to the EBSCO database. EBSCO provides NSU with Alt-Health Watch. Simply click on the underlined name to get into the database.
You are taken to the spot in NSU’s Electronic Library where the access point to the databases is located. Click on “US login” located just after the name “EBSCOmed/X-WEB.” See the arrow below.

SELECTING A DATABASE

You will next see EBSCOmed’s list of databases. Notice that the box to the left of Alt-HealthWatch has been checked to select the appropriate database. The next step is to click on the “Enter” box, either the one at the top of the list or the one at the bottom.
SEARCHING THE DATABASE

The next screen that you will see is EBSCOmed’s main search page. You will need to type the search terms that describe your research interests in the “Find” box. Here, we are interested in the “treatment” of “migraine headaches,” two separate concepts at this stage of the search. Notice the words “AND” and “OR” between the search terms. These words have special functions and are called “Boolean operators.” We will discuss the Boolean operators thoroughly later on. Notice also the parentheses. These will also be treated later on in the discussion of the Boolean operators.

To continue the search, you must click on the “Search” button to the right of the “Find” box. See the arrow on the right above.
The results of the search are then displayed in increments of 10 articles per page. You can see that 123 articles match the search terms. See the arrow below. The retrieved articles are often called “hits” in most databases.

Notice that the retrieved article titles have boxes to their left. To select articles, simply click in the boxes of the articles you find of interest. Alternatively, you can click on the underlined article title. Under the titles of the articles, you will find the words “Full Text.” See the small arrow. Clicking on the words “Full Text” also brings up the text of the article. “Full Text” refers to articles that are provided in their entirety and not in summary form. Normally, you see only the summary of the contents of an article. This is called an “Abstract.”
Below, you can see the results of clicking on the full text of the first article on the list of hits. At the top of the screen, you see the pertinent details of the article, the so-called “citation.” The citation contains the article title, its author(s), the name of the magazine or journal, and other information that allows you to cite it correctly in your references. “ISSN” means “international standard serial number,” a number that is unique to this journal, identifying it from all others. The ISSN does not need to be cited in your references.

At the bottom of the page, you will see the first part of the full text of the article itself.
PRINTING SELECTED ARTICLES

Saving and printing articles will be treated more thoroughly below. For now, just remember that to print the selected article, you will need to use the print function of the browser that you are using, whether Netscape Navigator or Internet Explorer. Below, you can see the location of the print icon on the menu bar of Netscape Navigator.

REFINING THE SEARCH

There will be times when you find the set of retrieved articles to be unnecessarily large: too many hits. For instance, if you need only a few of the most current articles, a list of 123 articles, as is the case in our search here, is too large. You can limit the number of hits by using filters, most often called “limiters.” Below, you can see where the limiters or filters can be accessed. You can “refine” your search with some of these limiters.

Below, you can see that the hits have been limited to the years 2000 - 2001 and that the type of publication requested is an “article,” the product of research done. An example is a study of the effects of certain herbal medicines on migraine headaches. To apply the limiters, click on the search button.
Below, you can see the effect of using limiters. The number of retrieved articles has been reduced from 123 to 9.

THE BOOLEAN OPERATORS

Below, you will find the section on Boolean Operators offered by trainers at EBSCOweb.

Sometimes a search can be overly general (results equal too many hits) or overly specific (results equal too few hits). To fine-tune your search, you can use AND, OR, and NOT operators to link your search words together. These operators will help you narrow or broaden your search to better express the terms you are looking for and to retrieve the exact information you need quickly.

USING THE "AND" OPERATOR:

If you have a search term that is too general, you can append several terms together using "AND." By stringing key terms together, you can further define your search and reduce the number of results. Note: Unless you define a specific search field, the result list will contain references where all your search terms are located in the full display.

• For example, type alternative medicine AND healthcare to find results that refer to both alternative medicine and healthcare.
USING THE "OR" OPERATOR:

In order to broaden a search, you can link terms together by using the "OR" operator. By using "OR" to link your terms together you can find documents on many topics. Linked by this operator, your words are searched simultaneously and independently of each other.

• As an example, search alternative medicine AND healthcare OR folk remedies to find results that reference the terms "alternative medicine" and "healthcare", or the term "folk remedies".

USING THE "NOT" OPERATOR:

In order to narrow a search, you can link words together by using the "NOT" operator. This operator will help you to filter out specific topics you do not wish included as part of your search.

• Type: alternative medicine OR healthcare NOT folk remedies to find results that contain the terms "alternative medicine" or "healthcare" but not the term "folk remedies".

• To further define your results, type: alternative medicine AND healthcare AND folk remedies to constrict the search to include all terms linked by the "AND" operator.

Grouping Terms Together Using Parentheses

Parentheses also may be used to control a search query. Without parentheses, a search is executed from left to right. Words that you enclose in parentheses are searched first. Why is this important? Parentheses allow you to control and define the way the search will be executed. The left phrase in parentheses is searched first; then based upon those results the second phrase in parentheses is searched.

Generalized Search: alternative medicine or healthcare and folk remedies or homeopathy
Focused Search: (alternative medicine or healthcare) and (folk remedies or homeopathy)

In the first example, the search will retrieve everything on "alternative medicine" as well as references to the terms "healthcare" and "folk remedies", and everything on “homeopathy".

In the second example, we have used the parentheses to control our query to only find articles about alternative medicine or healthcare that reference folk remedies or homeopathy.
SEARCHING IN THE DATABASE: KEYWORD SEARCH

There are four options that you can exercise in doing a search in EBSCOmed. Below, you can see the first option, the “Keyword Search,” which amounts to doing a simple search without some of the additional options offered by the database designers. Notice that the text on which to click in order to conduct a simple search is on the extreme left side of the navigation bar. See the arrow on the left side of the image. If you are sure of your search terms, and you need to do a very basic or quick search, you may choose to use this search option. In the example below, the terms have been entered already: “migraines and treatment.” Don’t forget the Boolean word “AND.” To initiate the search, simply click on the “Search” button.

The results are shown in the picture below. As you will note on the screen below, there are seven “hits” or matches to the search terms. Just click on “Full Text” (horizontal arrow) to view any of the articles. You may only be interested in a few of the articles listed. In that case, as you have seen in our discussion before, you need to click in the box to the left of the titles to make your choices (vertical arrows).
SEARCHING IN THE DATABASE: THE “NATURAL LANGUAGE SEARCH”

The second option is the one called “Natural Language Search.” You would exercise this option, if you were unsure of your search terms. Simply enter a phrase that describes the subject for which you are looking. A phrase has been entered in the example below to exemplify the so-called “natural” language. Natural language is the language of non-experts. Practitioners, on the other hand, use what is called “controlled vocabulary,” that is, the language of trained professionals. Notice the text on which to click to invoke this type of search.

The results of this search are shown in the image below. The search engine places the records in groups of ten per page. In this case, you will note that there are 5 pages of matches. See the numbers “1-5” just after the word “Pages” on the line to which the arrow points. To get to the next group of 10 articles, just click on number “2.”
SEARCHING IN THE DATABASE: THE “ADVANCED SEARCH”

The next two images below show the search page for the “Advanced Search” option. See the vertical arrow for the access point. This search option allows you to use the Boolean operators as well as several more limiters. In the example shown below, notice that the search terms “migraines and therapy” are connected by the “AND” operator in order to limit the search to the most relevant articles. Notice also that “therapy” and “management” are connected by the “OR” operator to expand the search to include these synonymous terms. The operators are all available within each box. You need only to click on the down arrow in the box to find them. You can see two additional limiters at the bottom of the image below: these are mechanisms to limit the results to a smaller range of publication dates and to limit the search to a specific journal. They have not been invoked here.
In the example below, you will note the additional “special limiters” for this database. You can select an article type from the drop-down list, search by author name, if known, or select a specific publication type.

The results are indicated below. A brief review of the citations shows that the “hits” are all found in peer-reviewed journals as requested.
SEARCHING IN THE DATABASE: THE “EXPERT” SEARCH

The last of the four search options is the so-called “Expert” mode. You can see the access point in the image below. See the vertical arrow.
The major difference between “Advanced” and “Expert” searching is the manner in which you use the Boolean operators. In the “Advanced” mode, you are given a box with labels to aid you in setting up the search with the Boolean operators. In “Expert” mode, on the other hand, you have only a command line with which to operate. Notice once again the syntax necessary to conduct a search using both the “AND” and the “OR” operators. You must place parentheses around the search terms connected by the “OR” operator. The procedure forces the search engine to execute this part of the search operation first—before doing the “AND” part of the search. The logic is clear. You need to combine the synonymous terms before you can search for connections between the disparate terms. In other words, “Therapy” and “Management” belong in a super set together. This, before you can find matches between either of the synonyms and “Migraines.”

**SAVING THE RESULTS: PRINTING**

Below, you can see the results of the previous search. As in all databases, you can print the articles.

The next step is to use the “Print Manager.” After choosing the appropriate format for the articles, you need to click on the “Print” button.
SAVING THE RESULTS: EMAILING

You can email the retrieved articles to yourself. Click on the appropriate button.

Below, you can see the “E-mail Manager.” Again, you make your format choice. Then, you type in your email address and click the “E-mail” button to execute the command.

SAVING THE RESULTS: SAVING TO DISK

Or, you can save the selected articles to disk.
Here, you can see the “Save Manager.”

You can see in the image above that the format choice has been made. The arrow points to the “Save” button that begins the process of transferring the saved articles to the floppy disk.

A very nice feature offered by *EBSCOmed* is the “Searched” line. Your search terms are always shown at the very top. See the arrow. This is not the case in the Ovid set of databases, where often no information is provided as to what the search terms are and what filters have been selected. Consequently, you are forced to write in the search parameters and filters by hand on the hard copy.