Getting started with... Cochrane Library

Go to... www.cochranelibrary.com

The Cochrane Library is an online source of evidence on the effectiveness of a wide range of health care interventions. Its content comprises full-text Cochrane systematic reviews published online, structured abstracts of other systematic reviews published in medical and health journals, and a register of controlled clinical trials. These are located in separate databases that are searched simultaneously. The online content is updated every three months to incorporate completely new systematic reviews, updates of existing reviews and the withdrawal of obsolete reviews.

Simple search

• Enter a term or terms – for example, “asthma” and “child” in the search box at the top right hand of the screen and click the magnifying glass icon
• Each database is searched simultaneously: Cochrane Reviews, Other Reviews, Trials, Methods Studies, Technology Assessments, Economic Evaluations and Cochrane Groups. The number of results is shown next to each database’s name. Browse the results and click on a title to access its abstract and a link through to the full-text PDF
• Basic search defaults to searching in ‘Title, Abstract or Keywords’. If you get too many results restrict the search to the title field only by selecting ‘Record Title’ from the drop-down menu of the search box

Search tips

• If your search term is a phrase enclose it with quotation marks, e.g., “colon cancer”; otherwise the words will be searched as colon AND cancer
• Plurals are automatically searched: “child” will also find “children”
• Truncate terms at either end of a word by typing an asterisk symbol [*]
• Typing NEAR between search terms can be used to narrow your search. For example “smoking NEAR pregnancy” will find the two words within six words of each in either order, so is more specific than using AND
• If you need to you can specify the number of words apart – for example NEAR/4
• Use the ‘Add to search manager’ link to save your search steps. They can be combined using AND/OR, e.g., #3 AND #7
• Have a look at the useful ‘Search tips’ in Search Help on the ‘Advanced Search’ screen

Help and enquiries

If you have any queries about the Cochrane Library please contact us at hcl-enquiries@bodleian.ox.ac.uk or 01865 (2) 21936

Dec 2017
Getting started with… Cochrane Library

Advanced search and Search Manager

- This search form gives you more flexibility in formulating your search, in order to look for matches for your terms in specific fields (e.g., ‘Author’) and also allows you to combine search terms using AND OR and NOT
- Use the ‘Search limits’ to limit the search to specific years. For example 2002-2007. The earliest record available in this database is a clinical trial from 1898

MeSH

Medical Subject Headings (‘Medical Terms’, or MeSH) are assigned to many records. These are controlled index terms which can be very effective for searching. You can use MeSH terms with – or instead of – free-text terms. To use them:
- Click on Medical Terms (MeSH)
- Enter a term in the search box and click on ‘LookUp’
- Review the Thesaurus matches and the MeSH trees
- You can ‘Save’ the search, ‘Add to search manager’, or simply ‘View results’

Saving search strategies and exporting citations

- This requires registration, which can be done by clicking the magnifying glass icon in the search box on the home page. On the following search page, click ‘Log in / Register’ at the top-right.
- Run your search, and when you obtain your results click on ‘Save search’
- From your search results you can export or all or selected citations to a text file

Online help

Cochrane Library has produced a range of guides to help you use this resource. See the ‘Help’ drop-down menu on the right of the main menu bar on the homepage.

Citing Cochrane systematic reviews

Click on the record title to see the details of the review. Click on ‘View/save citation’ for a range of options, including exporting them as plain text or to reference management software.

Help and enquiries

If you have any queries about the Cochrane Library please contact us at hcl-enquiries@bodleian.ox.ac.uk or 01865 (2) 21936