BUILDING A SEARCH STRATEGY IN MEDLINE (OVID) – STEP BY STEP

A. SEARCHING with the correct words:

1. Search each PICO concept one by one. Search for each concept as a subject heading and as a keyword.

   a) **Subject heading** searching ("Map term to subject heading" needs to be checked on)

   → Type one word in search box. A list of possible MeSH (Medical Subject Heading) terms is given.

   **NOTE: Before selecting one heading check out the:**
   
   i) **Tree:** click on blue underlined word to link to the tree and ask the following questions:
       ▪ Is this the most specific subject heading to use?
       ▪ Is it better to go broader?
       ▪ Should I use the Explode feature?
       ▪ Should I use the Focus feature? (Only good for when needing a few exact papers)

   ii) **Scope note:** click on i for information
       ▪ **Scope:** Does the definition provided match my meaning?
       ▪ **History note:** When was this subject heading introduced? Does it cover my time period?
       ▪ Are there any alternative suggestions? Words in CAPS are additional, related MeSH
       ▪ **Used for:** What are keyword synonyms covered by this subject heading?

   → After choosing ONE suitable subject heading, click the **Continue** button.

   Next screen presents a list of **subheadings** that qualify the search term
   
   ▪ Do I need just one aspect of the topic? eg Economical or adverse effects
   ▪ Will narrowing it down at this point be too soon?
   ▪ To choose all subheadings, either click on Include all Subheadings check box, or click **Continue**

   Your results for this search are displayed in the Search History box. Subject headings have / on the end

   b) **Keyword** searching ("Map term to subject heading" is checked off)

   No suitable subject heading? Wanting to search for material not yet indexed?

   → Type your search word(s) in search box. Multiple words are searched as a phrase. Separate a list of synonyms with OR. Can also use Select keyword.mp in the Subject Heading search process above. .Click on Search.

   **Tools to use with keyword searching:**

   1. **Wildcards** for:
      a) **Truncation:** * = Variant endings after the stem:
          child* = children, childhood, childlike, childbirth; balanc* = balance, balancing, balances, balanced etc.

      b) **Variant spelling within a word**
          ? = 0 or 1 additional letter in Canadian spelling colo?r, p?ediatric
          # = replaces variations of 1 character wom#n

   2. **Proximity (adj)** for more control and precision:
      Adjn = Controls the search to words relative to each other
      Seat adj5 wheelchair = find the word “seat” within 5 words of the word “wheelchair”.

   Your results for each search are displayed in the Search History box. Keywords have .mp on the end.

Cont'd/
A. **SEARCHING** with the correct words CONTD.:  

   2. Follow the same search process with your second single idea (e.g. your I concept)  

   The results of each search are listed as a numbered set.  

B. **COMBINING** results  

   1. Build your search strategy by  
      a) Combining the like, or similar, concepts or sets (e.g. all your P concepts) with **OR**  
      
      ![OR = mORE](image)  
      
      b) Combining different concepts or sets (e.g. the results of your P search, with those from your I search) with **AND**  
      
      ![AND = Less](image)  

C. **LIMIT**, or refine, combined search results  

   1. Click on **Limits**, then again on **Additional limits** to select  
      a) Limits that define human characteristics: Age, gender, ethnicity  
      b) Limits that define publication characteristics: Language, date published, study type  

D. Review **RESULTS**  

   a) Check out Abstract  
   b) Click on elink to see fulltext  
   c) Print out results list  
   d) Email results to yourself; check on **include Search History** to share how the results were achieved  
   e) Export all or selected results to bibliographic software such as Refworks, Endnote etc.  

   **Tip:** To improve your search, check out the Subject headings of some of your results for more ideas.  

E. **SAVE** search history to re-run your search, or to set up alerts  

   a) Make an account  
   b) Save search history  
   c) Set up an alert