

The Development of Topic Specific Medline Search Strategies: Paediatrics

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Aim: To produce a librarian designed search strategy in Paediatrics to reduce the errors and omissions in MeSH terminology inherent between doctor led searches.

Introduction: Delivering information to the point of healthcare is one of the biggest challenges facing medicine. Doctors in the emergency department of Manchester Royal Infirmary are anxious to provide the best quality care to their patients based on the available evidence. This EBM approach has resulted in the creation of one-page digests of the research or 'best evidence topics' (BestBETs). This finding and summarizing of the evidence base requires doctors to search on Medline. Emergency medicine is a broad specialty and an examination of existing search strategies reveals an inconsistency between doctors in their selection of MeSH headings for searches on paediatrics. A more systematic approach to searching the topic is necessary to ensure the retrieval of best evidence. It has also been supposed that there is a discrepancy between doctor led and librarian led Medline search strategies.

Methods: A local 'gold standard' search strategy on paediatrics was devised by medical librarians using a combination of MeSH headings and natural language. This was designed to be as sensitive as possible but still explicit and manageable by busy clinicians. This new paediatric filter was run against all the existing BETs that had employed MeSH headings for this age group (0-18yrs).

Results: The 'gold standard' librarian strategy retrieved more relevant articles. The strategy also identified MeSH subject headings, which should be a requisite for all search strategies in this subject area. More robust test procedures are planned for 2002.

Conclusion: The paediatric filter is employed whenever a Medline search on children or paediatrics is required.