



A Guide to Searching Medical Databases at St. Joseph's College of Nursing

The library contains databases of articles published in accredited medical and nursing journals. These articles contain valuable, current research for practicing members of the medical community. The vastness of the databases may provide challenges for new users. This guide provides an overview for searching the databases, simple steps to take, and tips for completing a successful search.

Searching the Databases

St. Joseph's School of Nursing provides you with access to several databases that you can use to search online for information. Among these databases are CINAHL (Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature), the National Library of Medicine, and others. To access the databases when you are using a computer in the library go to: http://intranet/network2000/medlib/lib_Databases.html.



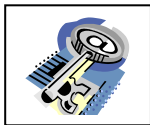
Before you start searching for information, it is important to plan your search.

Note: You should start gathering your references **well in advance of the due date for your assignment**. Pre-planning will provide adequate time for interlibrary loan requests to be filled and will increase the number of references you will be able to obtain.

Planning Your Search

1. Describe your topic in your own words and write it down.

For example, your topic might be "Nursing care of elderly patients who have experienced congestive heart failure."



2. Break your description down into several **KEY TERMS**.

Your topic would break down into the following three categories: "nursing," "elderly," and "congestive heart failure."

Each database has a list of CONTROLLED VOCABULARY words. When a journal publishes an article, that article is categorized based on the content of the article and how it fits into the list of CONTROLLED VOCABULARY. **It will be very helpful** to see how your KEY TERMS fit into a search engines vocabulary.

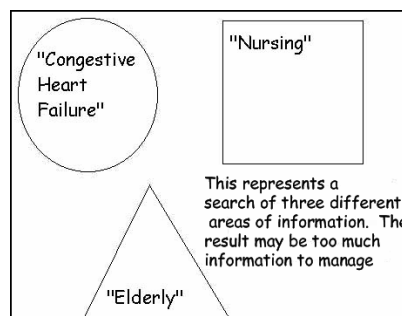
In order to check your KEY TERMS against CINAHL's CONTROLLED VOCABULARY follow the steps below: CINAHL – When you enter the CINAHL search site, select the link labeled "CINAHL Headings."

Simply enter the KEY TERM you plan to use to determine if you are using the appropriate CONTROLLED VOCABULARY for that database.

3. The manner in which you enter your **KEY TERMS** into one of the databases is very important.

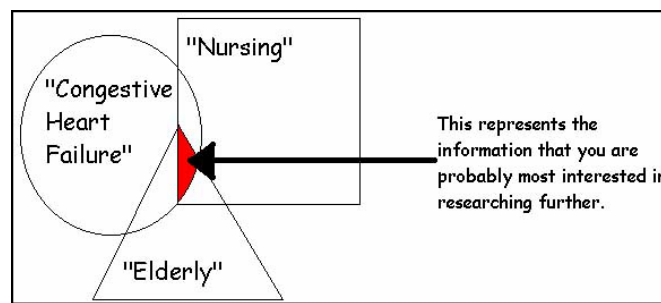
- a. If you enter only "congestive heart failure," you will get 866 results. If you only enter the term "nursing" generates 29,1542 results. If you only enter "elderly" generates 14,076 results.

<u>KEY TERM</u>	<u>Number of Results</u>
Congestive Heart Failure	866
Nursing	29,1542
Elderly	14,076



4. **Modify your search and combine the terms using the connector “AND” in order to search for all three of your KEY TERMS simultaneously.**
- a. If you search for “congestive heart failure AND nursing” the number of results reduces to 278. If you search for “congestive heart failure AND nursing AND elderly” your results decrease to 34. Not only are 34 articles more manageable, but these 34 articles are probably the most relevant to your topic.

<u>KEY TERMS</u>	<u>Number of Results</u>
Congestive Heart Failure AND Nursing	278
Congestive Heart Failure AND Nursing AND Elderly	34



5. **If your search returns too few results, try using “OR” to connect your KEY TERMS.**
- a. If you search for “cardiac care AND nursing AND elderly” you receive only 1 result. In order to increase the number of results, you may want to think of synonyms for one of your KEY TERMS. For example, a synonym for elderly would be geriatric. You would then change your search to “cardiac care AND nursing AND elderly OR geriatric”. Your results expand to 9,577.

<u>KEY TERMS</u>	<u>Number of Results</u>
Cardiac Care AND Nursing AND Elderly	1
Cardiac Care AND Nursing AND Elderly OR Geriatric	9,577

6. **This final tip is especially important if you plan to search using the CINAHL database. When you enter the CINAHL database, look just below the box where you would enter your KEY TERMS into the search. You will see a box entitled “SEARCH OPTIONS.” If you check the box that is labeled “Local Title for Nursing,” your search will only include journal items that the St. Joseph’s School of Nursing Library has in their local holdings. This will speed up your search because the references that you find will be contained in the St. Joseph’s College of Nursing Library. References not carried in your local library can be ordered, but will require some time to obtain.**