

TRAINING PEOPLE TO USE THE COCHRANE LIBRARY

The following is meant as a guide for those who are responsible for teaching others how to use the Cochrane Library. It is not meant to be prescriptive but suggests a format to be used and raises issues that may need covering at the various stages of the training. It is aimed at trainers who already have a fairly good understanding of the Cochrane Library themselves, but who want suggestions as to the format training might take.

For complete beginners to searching in general, it might be necessary to cover basic searching skills such as Boolean searching, truncating, phrase searching, thesaurus terms, compiling a search strategy, etc. These are not covered by this guide.

There is potentially a lot of information to cover when doing a session on the Cochrane Library and you will need to decide what to include or exclude according to your audience and the time you have allocated for the training session.

Background information

You may want to place your training in some context. The following are some topics that you might like to cover, depending on time.

- What is an RCT?
- What is a systematic review?
- The NHS R&D Information Systems Strategy
- The Cochrane Collaboration
- When to use the Cochrane Library
- When not to use the Cochrane Library

The self teaching guide, also available to download from the CRD web pages will give you some of the information you might need to talk about some of the above. There are also two sets of powerpoint slides which provide some visual aids for supporting a training session.

The Opening Screen

It can be useful to explain the layout of the opening screen to users, as the software for the Cochrane Library is very different to other available databases.

At this stage you might want to:-

- go through the functions on the toolbar
- explain that the different databases are listed in the index window.
- show how to use the re-sizing buttons.
- demonstrate how to open out the different sections of the databases in the index window, and how to select the desired document.
- show that documents, once selected, will be displayed in the document window.
- show the difference between the records in the different databases (e.g. full text documents in CDSR, bibliographic references in CCTR, structured abstracts in DARE)
- run through some of the main features of the different records e.g. in a Cochrane review, show the conclusions, coversheet, etc.
- illustrate the use of the 'outline' button and 'find' button.

Searching the Cochrane Library

General points to make:-

- You cannot choose to search just one part of the Cochrane Library, all databases are searched at once.
- Cannot search for words of less than three characters or numerals
- All text is searched
- Not all records are indexed with thesaurus (MeSH) headings
- An asterisk * entered alone retrieves all records
- An asterisk * placed at the end of a word retrieves all words beginning with the stem entered, e.g. arter* = artery, arterial, arteries, etc.
- Boolean searching - AND, OR, NOT
- Phrase searching - use quotes or NEXT e.g. "hip replacements" or hip NEXT replacements
- Other search features, proximity searching e.g. hip NEAR replacements

Simple searching

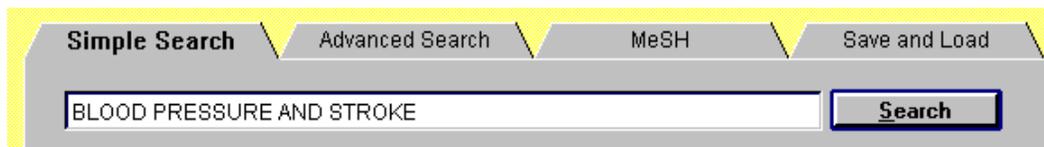
The simple search function allows very rough and ready searching, if people are just wanting to get a quick view of what there might be on a particular topic.

Full-text searching does sometimes bring up unexpected results, i.e. records that don't seem to reflect the subject searched for, because the Cochrane Library searches through the whole of the document, which may contain thousands of words, to retrieve records.

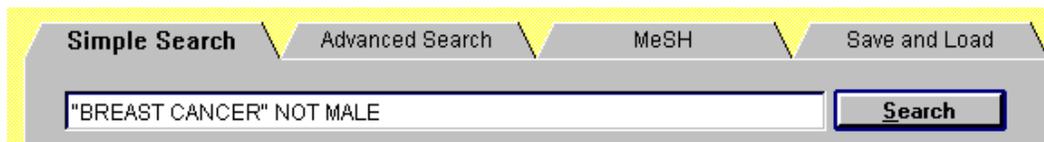
The simple search screen allows you to limit a search to new or updated items.

The following are examples of searches you might want to demonstrate.

Combining terms: narrowing down your search

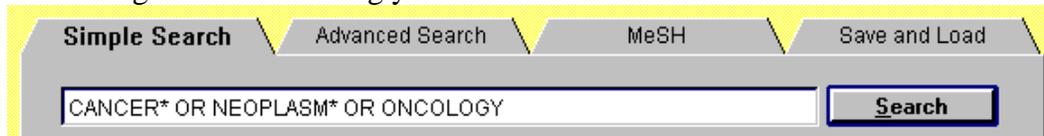


The screenshot shows the 'Simple Search' tab selected in a navigation bar. Below the navigation bar is a search input field containing the text 'BLOOD PRESSURE AND STROKE' and a 'Search' button to its right.



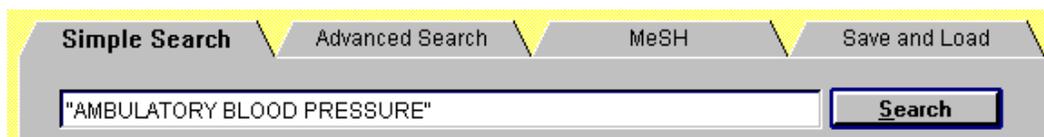
The screenshot shows the 'Simple Search' tab selected in a navigation bar. Below the navigation bar is a search input field containing the text '"BREAST CANCER" NOT MALE' and a 'Search' button to its right.

Combining terms: broadening your search

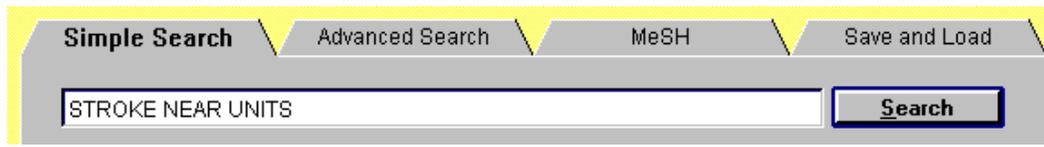


The screenshot shows the 'Simple Search' tab selected in a navigation bar. Below the navigation bar is a search input field containing the text 'CANCER* OR NEOPLASM* OR ONCOLOGY' and a 'Search' button to its right.

Phrases and word proximity



The screenshot shows the 'Simple Search' tab selected in a navigation bar. Below the navigation bar is a search input field containing the text '"AMBULATORY BLOOD PRESSURE"' and a 'Search' button to its right.



Advanced searching

The advanced search screens allow more comprehensive searching on the Cochrane Library, with the incorporation of thesaurus (MeSH) searching. It is important to point out to people that to do a thorough search of the Cochrane Library it is necessary to do a combination of textword searching and thesaurus (MeSH) searching.

General points to make:-

- Individual searches are stored so that they can be further refined
- Searches can be limited by publication date
- Searches can be limited to particular fields, e.g. title, abstract, etc.
- Searches can be combined using AND, OR, NOT.
- MeSH searches are added to the advanced search
- MeSH searches are initially equivalent to searching the permuted index in MeSH.
- MeSH terms can be exploded.
- To return to the opening screen to view the records, click on the large button at the bottom of the advanced search screen.

Save and load

- If users are particularly keen on repeating a search every time a new edition of the Cochrane Library is issued, this function allows them to save complicated searches to be re-run.
- Can also load searches that have been run in other databases or export searches (i.e. onto a floppy disc) for use elsewhere. (These searches might need editing.)
- Each saved search needs to be given a different name.

Displaying and navigating round documents

Some of these features might have been covered by your introduction to the Cochrane Library opening screen, but at this stage you might want to cover:-

- demonstrate how to open out the different sections of the databases in the index window, and how to select the desired document.
- documents, once selected, will be displayed in the document window.
- show the difference between the records in the different databases (e.g. full text documents in CDSR, bibliographic references in CCTR, structured abstracts in DARE)
- run through some of the main features of the different records
- illustrate the use of the 'outline' button and 'find' button.
- In the CDSR, demonstrate how to display the odds-ratio diagrams by going to the summary of analyses' section
- Show how to display the summary and detail diagrams
- how scales, sorting and the type of statistic shown can be altered

Displaying the CDSR Odds-ratio diagrams and tables

It is important to show that this information exists in the CDSR database on the Cochrane Library because it give more details on the results. Point out that any information taken from the odds-ratio diagrams should illuminate what is written in the text of the systematic review and vice versa and that neither should be consulted in isolation.

- Odds-ratio diagrams are only available in CDSR section
- Show how to generate odds-ratio diagrams via the 'Summary of analyses' section
- Point out that first diagram is a summary of each comparison/outcome.
- Show how 'detail' tables can be viewed
- Change the statistics being shown from odds-ratio to relative risk.
- Change scales to accomodate very high or very low figures

Printing and downloading

Important to point out that records from CDSR are long, especially if printing is expensive and you pay for it!!

- Can choose to print out single documents or selected documents
- Can print out a listing or full documents
- Cannot at present print out parts of a review other than by copying to the clipboard
- 'Summary of analysis' diagrams and 'Tables of characteristics' have to be printed out separately and cannot be saved as files.