MeSH searching vs keyword searching

Type the word hospital into PubMed, and you will find articles that contain the word hospital. This does not necessarily mean that the articles will be about hospitals. On the other hand, a MeSH search for hospitals means that all of the results will be on the subject of hospitals.

Finding MeSH on your topic

1. From the PubMed homepage, open the MeSH browser:

2. Decide what you would like to research in PubMed, then type a concept (a word or phrase) into the MeSH search box. E.g. Type migraine, then click Search. From the search results screen you can see that Migraine Disorders is the correct MeSH term to find information in PubMed about migraines.

3. Choose a suitable MeSH and click on its link. E.g. Click on the Migraine Disorders link for more detail.
4. The MeSH information page tells you more about the term so that you can decide if it is appropriate for your needs.

Search PubMed using MeSH

2. Be aware that a search using the MeSH Migraine Disorders will automatically search for all of the narrower MeSH which are indented beneath it. This is called exploding. If you don't want to include all of the indented MeSH, exclude them by applying the [mh:noexp] code after the MeSH term.

   In the example below a search for "migraine disorders"[mh] will search for Migraine Disorders and the four MeSH beneath it. A search for "migraine disorders"[mh:noexp] will only search for Migraine Disorders and none of the MeSH beneath it.

3. To find articles where a topic is the major focus of an article instead of using [mh], simply apply the code [majr] after the MeSH term instead. E.g. “diet”[majr]

4. To focus your search, use a combination of two or more MeSH. You will still need to apply the appropriate code in square brackets after each of the MeSH terms (mh, mh:noexp or majr).

   For example: “diet”[majr] AND "migraine disorders"[majr] AND “adolescent”[mh]

This search will find papers on the subject of diet, migraine and adolescents. Additionally, diet and migraine must be the main focus of these articles.

See Also:

A short video on using MeSH: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K98AO3w4JA4&feature=youtu.be
MeSH tutorial from the NLM: https://www.nlm.nih.gov/bsd/disted/meshtutorial/introduction/

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