

If you're beginning a literature search or a research paper you need to select a database. But what is the best database for nursing and medical research? How do you find the databases? What is the difference between PubMed, CINAHL, and Web of Science? And is it necessary to search more than one database?

To select a database, click on "Research" and select "Databases". From here you can enter the name of the database in the search box. If you don't know the name of the database that's okay, simply browse by specific subject to find a curated list of databases.

But what is the difference between databases? Simply - scope.

PubMed covers all areas of biomedical literature including medical sciences and nursing. While CINAHL - the Cumulative Index of Nursing and Allied Health Literature - focuses on various aspects of medicine including nursing and allied health literature. Pubmed and CINAHL both allow you to limit by publication type, which will allow you to find those randomized control trials. Web of Science is a multi-disciplinary database that covers more than just the sciences.

So why do we search more than one database? While there will be significant overlap between PubMed and CINAHL and even Web of Science, each database has its strengths. Journals indexed in PubMed are not necessarily in CINAHL and vice versa. In addition, CINAHL has stronger allied health coverage than PubMed. Web of Science will allow you to track citations. Pubmed and CINAHL both allow you to limit by publication type so that you can find those randomized controlled trials. If you need an article written by a nurse, Cinahl is the place to go. You can find just that.

Finally, if you're struggling to find relevant literature sometimes it's very helpful to just to try a different database. Struggling in PubMed? Try CINAHL, or even web of science. The same search in different databases may produce different results based on journal indexing, scope, and database strengths and weaknesses.