Writing for the British Journal of Midwifery – how I tried to make literature searching approachable to professional midwives.

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As an academic librarian supporting health programmes I work closely with a number of professional programmes. One of these programmes is pre-registration midwifery. Through my relationship with the midwifery team I was invited to write a joint article for the British Journal of Midwifery on literature searching for midwives (Power and Siddall, 2015). The resulting article was contextualised by Alison Power who embedded the literature searching theory in the context of revalidation for the NMC (NMC, 2015). I structured the article in a way to make literature searching more approachable, and to offer some guidance on where further support may be found, such as NHS library services. Below is a summary of the article.

Keeping on top of developments and innovations in health can feel overwhelming, with research from across the world being published daily. Searching for literature may seem one step too far when you are already juggling your work and home life. However you do not need to feel overwhelmed, there is help out there. Specifically this article will take you through a process of searching for literature by following some simple questions:

What am I looking for?	information on breastfeeding and childhood obesity
What keywords can I use to search?	breastfeeding, obesity, infant nutrition
Are there any other words that I can use? [consider medical terminology, abbreviations and alternative spellings]	Breastfeed, breastfed, infant feeding, Health benefits, Newborns
What type of information do I need?	Government guidelines and / or research from the UK

Table 1: Literature Search Framework

My approach reflects the one I take with pre and post-registration students to make literature searching less daunting. When I search, I always recommend that you start with the main concept or issue. See if there is relevant literature coming out of the search, and then use other terms to help narrow down your search. It is also useful to have a few alternative keywords to use if your initial search does not prove fruitful. In the same way that in practice a midwife may use abbreviations, medical terminology and lay man's terms, use a few different terms when you search so you feel confident that you are getting relevant results. This builds flexibility into the search so that it is possible to adapt to find more results. It can be frustrating if only one keyword or phrase is used that is specific to an area of practice, which does not clean results

because it is not used in the wider literature. It may seem like you are just playing with spellings, but you will be surprised how much a difference singular and plural can make when you are searching, for example woman or women. When searching for literature on the benefits of breastfeeding it is possible to gain broader results if you also search for infant nutrition.

You can combine your keywords or search terms using instructive words to help refine your search, these are AND, OR and NOT [see Figure 1].
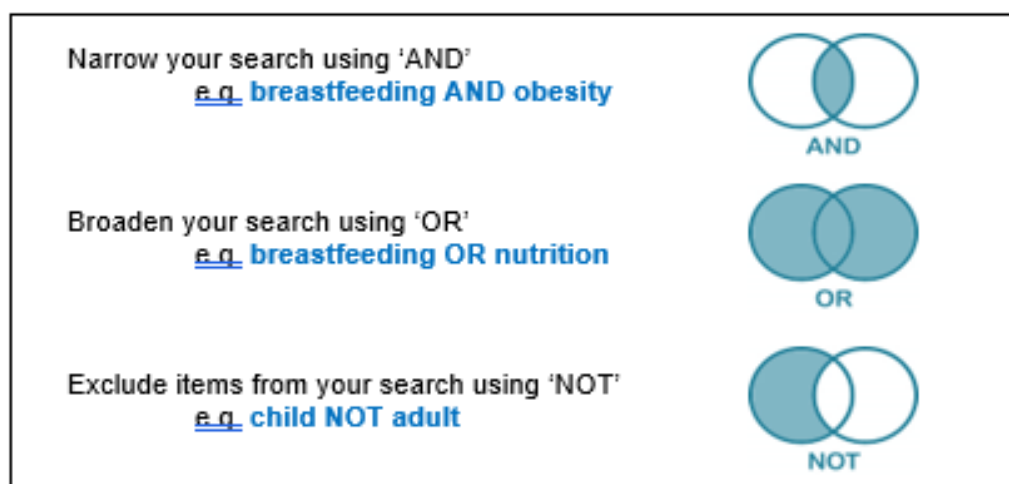

Figure 1: Combining Keywords

Using AND will only give you results where both of your terms are present. If you use OR when you are searching, this allows you to keep your search broad and use terms that are synonymous, for example, breastfeeding OR nutrition. Databases may also offer you the option to exclude results from your search; this can be useful if you are getting results that are not what you are looking for. Therefore you add the term into your search but preface it with NOT. It is also possible to do phrase

searches, where you instruct the database to only provide results where the words that are used appear together. An example might be "infant nutrition". The use of double quotation marks acts as an instruction so results will only appear if the phrase is included in the text.

One of the objectives I hoped to achieve through writing this article was to highlight the support available from local and national library services. Therefore I included reference to the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) library within the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) in London (RCM, [n.d.]). Their local NHS Trust Library – for access to print and online resources, as well as literature searching and critical appraisal support. I also provided an overview of web-based search engines [Table 2].

Table 2. Useful web search engines	
NICE: Evidence Search	https://www.evidence.nhs.uk/
Trip Database	http://www.tripdatabase.com/
Google Scholar	http://scholar.google.co.uk/

Table 2: Useful web search engines

NHS Evidence or Evidence Search: health and social care

Is run by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and allows you to search through health and social care information on the internet, filtering out any commercial sites or blogs. It is also the gateway to the BNF, BNFC and NHS journals and databases. When you search NHS Evidence you can narrow down your search according to areas of interest, types of information and sources. This means, rather than trying to access government policies on the websites, you can

instead just click on sources and limit to gov.uk or the Department of Health (NICE, 2014).

TRIP database

The TRIP database is designed to allow users to quickly find high-quality research. It is colour coded according to the quality of the evidence, with green being the best systematic reviews. The database can also be used to search for images and videos as well as patient information (TRIP, [n.d.]).

Google Scholar

Is the 'academic' side of Google searching the web for academic publications, books, theses as well as many other resources. The number of results can at times seem overwhelming, but if you search with keywords and use the date range to narrow it down you should be able to find some interesting results. Google scholar can identify if you are linked to an institution with access to the resources and will link you through to the full text if it is available to you (Google Scholar, [n.d.]).

This article has illustrated good practice when searching for literature and highlighted some key resources that you can investigate. The article tried to highlight the support and resources available through an NHS Trust Library. I hope that through the article in the British Journal of Midwifery we inspired some midwives to have a go at literature searching and provided some guidance on where to look for more support.

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