Off-Grid Searching – The Third Way?

An automated grid can do searches, just using the terms you select from it. This is a quick way to create and run different search strategies.

Overview:

Searches often start with terms on a grid. Eg: PICO. Combining these with Boolean logic creates the search strings. However, this process can be hard for new searchers and time-consuming for experienced ones. But what if you could select terms directly from the initial grid?

New Basic Search Grid:

Boolean operators are automatic.
Terms in same column linked with OR.
Whole columns linked with AND.
Selected terms are included in search:

Patient | Intervention | Comparison | Outcome
--- | --- | --- | ---
Hypertension | aspirin | red wine | heart attack
High blood pressure | NSAIDS | polyphenols | myocardial infarction

Orange Terms Selected:

(Hypertension AND aspirin AND polyphenols AND myocardial infarction)

Blue Terms Selected:

(high blood pressure AND NSAIDS AND heart attack)

This is a very quick way to explore different combinations of terms on multiple sites.

Advanced Search Grid:

Now add modified sets of terms.
This expands the possibilities.
Using for example:

Double quotes:
To focus on phrases or remove stemming.
Fields:
To search in specific parts of the records.
PubMed codes used as labels, but are automatically adapted for other sites.
Keywords:
With PubMed codes, used as before.
Filters (not shown):
Create additional columns of filter terms.

Orange Terms Selected:

(Hypertension OR "high blood pressure")
AND (aspirin OR NSAIDS) AND (red wine OR polyphenols) AND (heart attack OR myocardial infarction))

Blue Terms Selected:

("Hypertension" OR "high blood pressure")
AND (aspirin OR NSAIDS) AND (red wine OR "polyphenols") AND ("heart attack" OR myocardial infarction)

Purple Terms Selected:

(Hypertension OR "high blood pressure")
AND (aspirin OR NSAIDS) AND (red wine OR "polyphenols") AND ("heart attack" OR myocardial infarction)

Only the term(s) selected by the user get searched at any one time. The grid can be larger.

References: