Review of *PubMed* Search Tips

1. Break down your research topic into its separate concepts.  
   *Example:* Use of **biodegradable metal stents** in **cardiac surgery**

2. Search each concept separately in *PubMed* to find the appropriate medical subject headings (i.e., MeSH terms). If subject headings are not available, brainstorm synonyms for each concept.  
   *Example:*  
   - “Stents”[MeSH] (for stents)  
   - “Cardiac Surgical Procedures”[MeSH] (for cardiac surgery)  
   - “Metals”[MeSH] (for metal)  
   - “Absorbable Implants”[MeSH] (for biodegradable)

3. Click on the “Advanced” link below the search box and combine your search terms. First, combine any synonyms using OR. Then, combine different concepts using AND.  
4. Apply limits.  
*Example:* Limit search results to *Humans* and *English* language articles published in the past 5 years.

5. Evaluate your results and modify your search strategy if necessary.  
*Example:* Look at the title, abstract, and/or MeSH terms of a relevant result to pick out additional words or MeSH terms that you can use to revise your search.

If you obtain very few search results, try clearing all your limits (called “filters” in PubMed). Remember that PubMed will apply limits from your initial search to all the searches you do, unless you click on the “Clear all” link to the left of the list of search results.

If you obtain too many search results, make one (or more) of your MeSH terms a major topic [Majr] of the article. *Example:* “Stents”[Majr] AND (“Cardiac Surgical Procedures”[MeSH] OR "Cardiovascular Diseases/surgery"[MeSH]) AND “Metals”[MeSH] AND “Absorbable Implants”[MeSH]

Additional note:
To find “in process” PubMed records on your topic (which have not yet been assigned MeSH terms) and records supplied by the publisher (which were not selected for full indexing and inclusion in Medline), search your topic using keywords (remember to brainstorm synonyms) and combine your search with the command “inprocess[sb] OR publisher[sb]”.  
*Example:* stent* AND (cardiac OR cardiovascular OR heart) AND (metal OR metals OR metallic) AND (biodegradable OR absorbable implant*) AND (inprocess[sb] OR publisher[sb])

**Questions? Contact Giovanna** at 514-398-7340 or giovanna.badia@mcgill.ca or room 207 in the Schulich Library of Science & Engineering.

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