

Cumulative Index of Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL) Complete provides full text for more than 1,600 nursing and allied health journals dating back to 1937 and books. Articles are indexed using CINAHL subject headings.

## 1 What is the question?

A well-formulated question provides the foundation for a relevant and focused search. We will utilize the following clinical question to demonstrate how to search CINAHL:

In breast cancer survivors (P), what is the effect of exercise (I) on quality of life (O)?

Refer to **PICO** at the Library's EBP Portal for additional information.

## 2 Identify possible search terms

Use the concepts identified in the PICO to identify subject headings and keywords.

- **Subject headings/controlled vocabulary** are authoritative terms that describe given concepts.
- **Keywords** are assigned by the author, used in an article title, abstract, or other text field in a database.

The following chart summarizes possible CINAHL subject headings, keywords, truncation and wild cards by key concept for the clinical question. Note: The keyword lists are examples only and not exhaustive.

	PICO Component	Key Concepts	Subject Headings	Keywords/Truncation/Wild Cards
P	Patient or Problem	Breast cancer survivors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breast neoplasms</li> <li>• Survivors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Breast neoplasm*", "Breast cancer*", "Breast tumor*", etc.</li> <li>• Survivor*</li> </ul>
I	Intervention, Indicator, Exposure, Prognostic Factor	Exercise	Exercise	exercis*, "physical activit*", walk*, run*
C	Comparison or Control	No exercise	Not applicable	Not applicable
O	Outcome	Quality of Life	Quality of life	"quality of life", "life quality"

### 2.1 How to Use CINAHL Subject Headings

- The search default is "Advanced Search".
- Check the "Suggest Subject Terms" box.
- Mapping will find or suggest headings from CINAHL's controlled vocabulary.
- There are similarities between the subject headings in CINAHL and MEDLINE, but do not assume that they are the same.
- When a search topic includes more than main idea, you will get better results if you search each concept separately. Use quotes when searching for a phrase.

The screenshot shows the EBSCOhost search interface. At the top, it says "Searching: CINAHL Complete | Choose Databases". There is a checkbox for "Suggest Subject Terms" which is checked. The search input field contains the text "breast cancer". To the right of the input field is a dropdown menu labeled "Select a Field (optional)". There are "Search" and "Clear" buttons. Below the main search field, there are two more search fields, each with an "AND" dropdown and a "Select a Field (optional)" dropdown. At the bottom, there are links for "Basic Search", "Advanced Search", and "Search History".

Results For: breast cancer

Check box to view subheadings.   
  Click linked term for tree view.

Explode (+)    Major Concept    Scope

Breast Cancer Use: [Breast Neoplasms](#)

breast cancer (Search as Keyword) ?

- “Mapping Display” shows the best matches.
- Click the “Subject Heading” link to view its tree.
- If your search did not map to a desirable subject heading, select the box “Search as Keyword”.

← Back to Term List    Tree View For: Breast Neoplasms    Subheadings for: Breast Neoplasms    Search Database

Check box to view subheadings.   
  Click linked term for tree view.

Explode (+)     Major Concept     Scope

Include All Subheadings

Or select one or more subheadings to restrict your search

- Analysis/AN
- Blood/BL
- Blood Supply/BS
- Cerebrospinal Fluid/CF
- Chemically Induced/CI
- Classification/CL
- Complications/CO

Search Term    Explode (+)    Major Concept

Breast Neoplasms         X

In the Tree View, you can:

- **Explode** retrieves results that contain the subject heading and its narrower, more specific terms.
- **Major Concept** restricts results to a subset where the subject heading is considered the main focus of the article. Note: Focusing the search term at this point may greatly reduce the number of search results.
- **Scope** provides additional information about the subject heading or subheading.
- Click applicable subheadings to refine your subject heading term to specific topics; however, if you do not wish to restrict the focus of your search, then select “Include All Subheadings.”
- Click “Search Database” to continue.

Basic Search    Advanced Search    **Search History**

Search History/Alerts

Print Search History    Retrieve Searches    Retrieve Alerts    Save Searches / Alerts

Select / deselect all    Search with AND    Search with OR    Refresh Search Results

Search ID#	Search Terms	Search Options	Actions
S4	(MH "Quality of Life")	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	<a href="#">View Results (103,878)</a> <a href="#">View Details</a> <a href="#">Edit</a>
S3	(MH "Exercise")	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	<a href="#">View Results (101,292)</a> <a href="#">View Details</a> <a href="#">Edit</a>
S2	(MH "Survivors")	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	<a href="#">View Results (22,906)</a> <a href="#">View Details</a> <a href="#">Edit</a>
S1	(MH "Breast Neoplasms")	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	<a href="#">View Results (73,856)</a> <a href="#">View Details</a> <a href="#">Edit</a>

- Repeat the search process with the remaining subject headings: survivors, exercise, and quality of life.
- Click “Search History” to keep track of the search strategy.

## 2.2 How to Use Keywords

Supplement the subject heading search with keywords when the topic is too new to have subject headings or too few results are retrieved.

- Uncheck the “Suggest Subject Terms” checkbox.
- Choose a specific field from “Select a Field” to search; if you don’t select one, the search will be completed in the default search fields.
- Use quotes to search a phrase.
- Use asterisk to truncate a word or phrase to locate all possible variations. (“Breast Cancer\*” = “Breast Cancer”, “Breast Cancers”).

Searching: CINAHL Complete | Choose Databases

Suggest Subject Terms

EBSCOhost

"breast cancer"    Select a Field (optional)    Search    Clear ?

AND        Select a Field (optional)

AND        TX All Text

TI Title

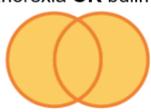
AU Author

AB Abstract

Basic Search    Advanced Search    Search History

### 3 Perform the Search

To be comprehensive, search using both subject headings/controlled vocabulary and keywords. Search one concept at a time versus multiple concepts simultaneously to reduce errors when applying Boolean operators and other connectors. This approach allows the searcher to recombine concepts or try new combinations.

Boolean Operator	Example	Results
<b>OR</b>	anorexia <b>OR</b> bulimia 	<b>OR</b> creates a set that contains <i>any</i> of the search terms. Use <b>OR</b> to combine synonyms, spelling variations or related terms. <b>OR</b> means more.
<b>AND</b>	anorexia <b>AND</b> bulimia 	<b>AND</b> creates a set that contains <i>all</i> of the search terms. Use <b>AND</b> to find citations which are "about" all of the concepts and answers the question. <b>AND</b> means less.
<b>NOT</b>	anorexia <b>NOT</b> bulimia 	<b>NOT</b> is used to create a set that <i>excludes</i> results from the unwanted concept. <b>NOT</b> is the least used Boolean operator – use carefully. <b>NOT</b> means less.

Use Boolean operators (**OR**, **AND**, **NOT**) to combine search terms.

Note: Searching one concept at a time allows the searcher to try different combinations of the search terms.

Search History/Alerts

Print Search History Retrieve Searches Retrieve Alerts Save Searches / Alerts

Select / deselect all **Search with AND** **Search with OR** **Delete Searches** **Refresh Search Results**

Search ID#	Search Terms	Search Options	Actions
<input type="checkbox"/> S5	 S1 AND S2 AND S3 AND S4	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	 View Results (123)  View Details  Edit
<input type="checkbox"/> S4	 (MH "Quality of Life+")	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	 View Results (103,878)  View Details  Edit
<input type="checkbox"/> S3	 (MH "Exercise+")	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	 View Results (101,292)  View Details  Edit
<input type="checkbox"/> S2	 (MH "Survivors+")	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	 View Results (22,906)  View Details  Edit
<input type="checkbox"/> S1	 (MH "Breast Neoplasms+")	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	 View Results (73,856)  View Details  Edit

Click "Search ID#s" to combine search results with **AND/OR**.

- To combine synonyms or related terms, use **OR**. **OR** increases the number of citations.
- To combine terms that may answer the clinical question (i.e., S1, S2, S3, S4), use **AND**. **AND** decreases the number of citations.

### 4 Apply Limits

The terms "limits" and "filters" are often used interchangeably. Applying limits can produce results that are focused and well-defined.

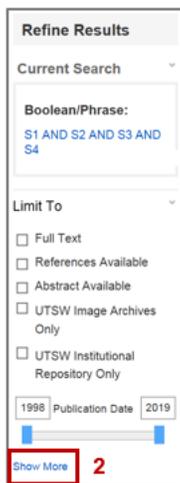
Search History/Alerts

Print Search History Retrieve Searches Retrieve Alerts Save Searches / Alerts

Select / deselect all **Search with AND** **Search with OR** **Delete Searches** **Refresh Search Results**

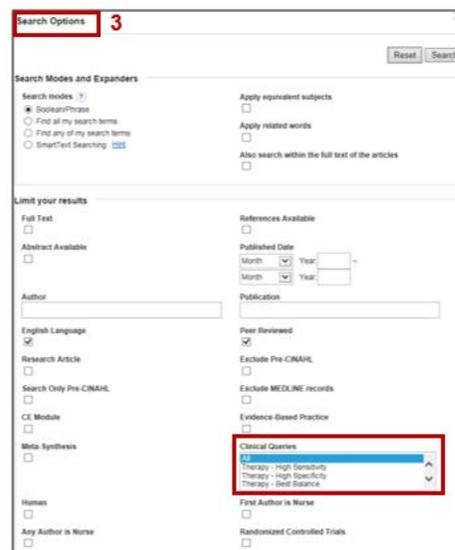
Search ID#	Search Terms	Search Options	Actions
<input type="checkbox"/> S5	 S1 AND S2 AND S3 AND S4	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	 View Results (123)  View Details  Edit

1. To limit results, under "Actions", click "View Results" on the applicable search statement.



2. In Left Side bar under “Refine Results”, click “Show More” in the “Limit To” section.
3. Select the appropriate limits in the “Search Options”. For example:
  - Peer Reviewed
  - English Language
  - Publication Date
  - Publication Type

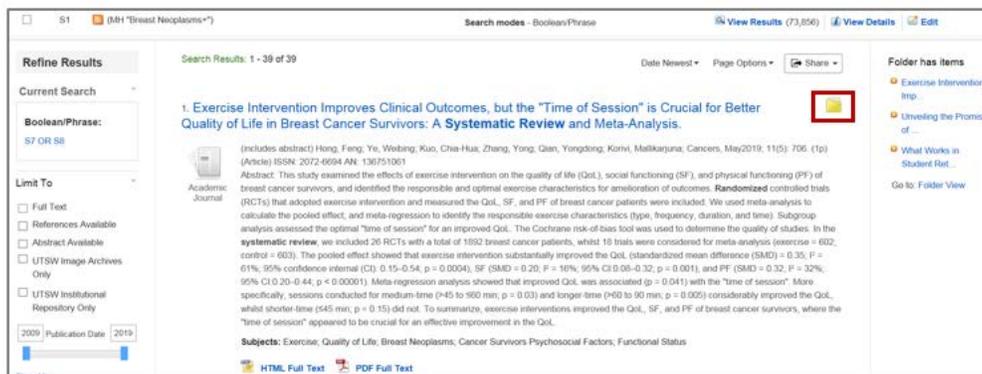
**Clinical Queries filters** are high quality Evidence-Based Practice search filters created by McMaster University. For each Clinical Query (i.e., Review, Therapy, etc.), you can choose from *Sensitivity* (i.e., most relevant articles but probably some less relevant ones), *Specificity* (i.e., mostly relevant articles but probably omitting a few), or *Best Balance* (i.e., combination that optimizes the trade-off between sensitivity and specificity).



## 5 Review, Output Options and Save/Retrieve

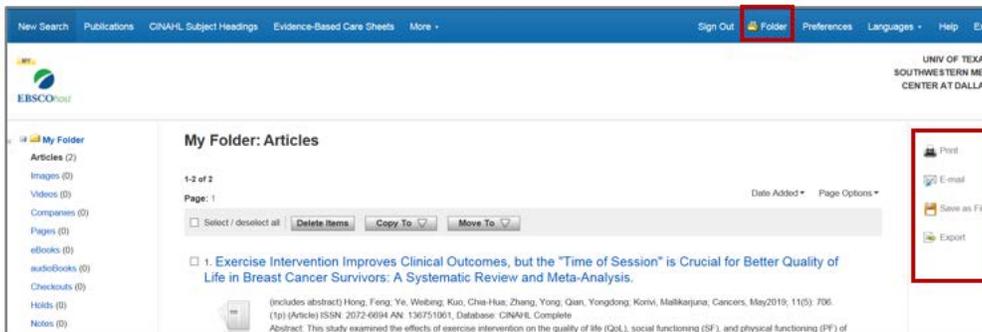
### 5.1 Review

- Review results from selected “Search ID#”.
- Each citation lists the journal title; article title; author(s); date, volume, issue, and/or pages; and abstract, if available.
- Click the blue “Folder” icon to add article(s) of interest to your Folder; the blue folder turns yellow after the article is added. To remove article, click the folder again.



### 5.2 Output Options

- Click the “Folder View” link to view the citations in your folder.
- Print, e-mail, save, or export citations to EndNote or another citation manager.
- To save your search strategy and results, create an EBSCO account. If you do not, the search strategy and folder citations will be deleted when you exit CINAHL.



To export to EndNote:

- Click on “Direct Export in RIS Format.”
- Click “Save” to export.



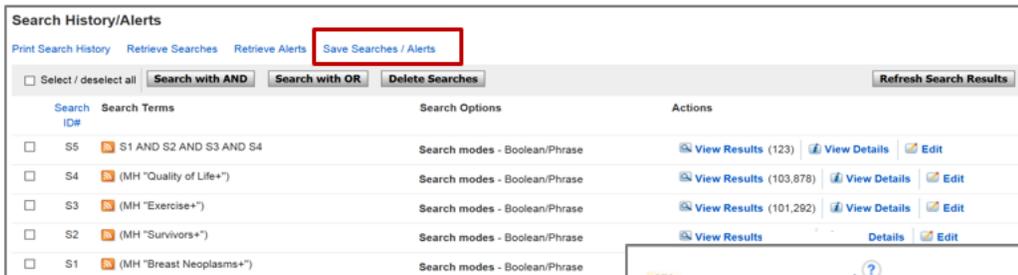
## 5.3 Setting up an Account



Click the “Sign In” link and choose “Create a New Account”.

Use your UTSW email address.

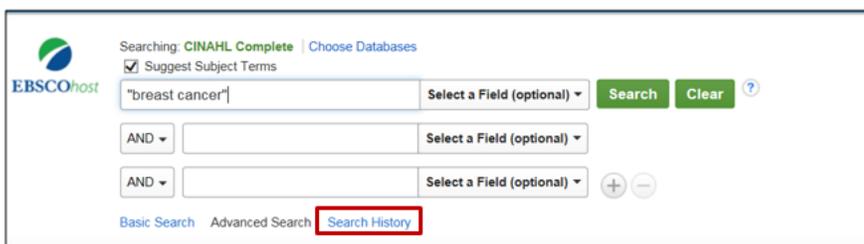
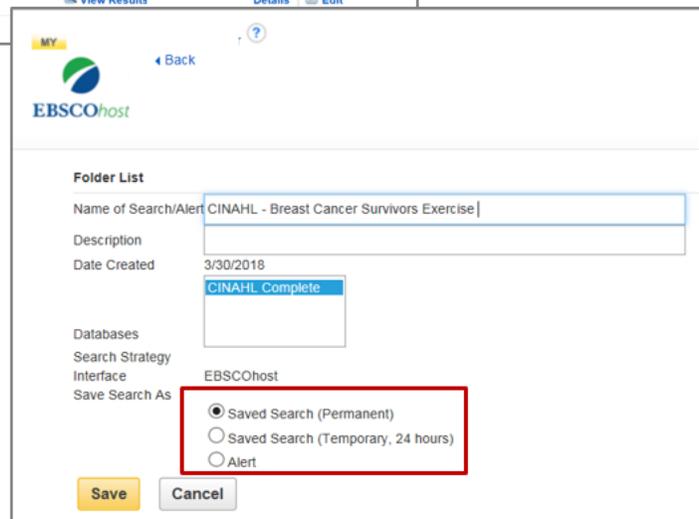
## 5.4 Saving/Retrieving Searches and Alerts



To **save**, click on “Save Searches/Alerts”.

You can save as:

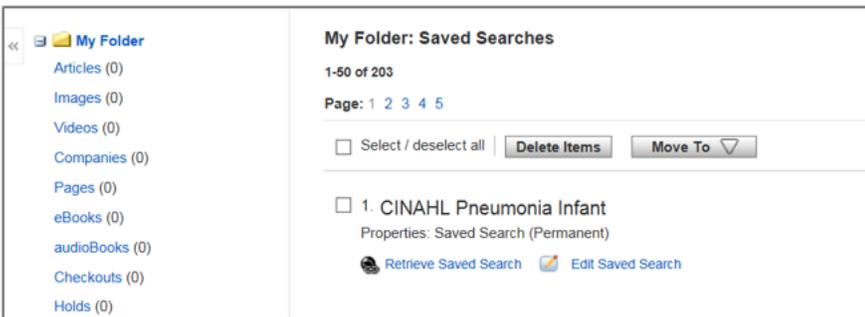
- **Saved Search (Permanent)** to save, re-execute, or edit your search
- **Saved Search (Temporary)** to save for 24 hours
- **Alert** to run your search on a regular schedule and forward results to your email address



To **retrieve**, click on “Search History.”

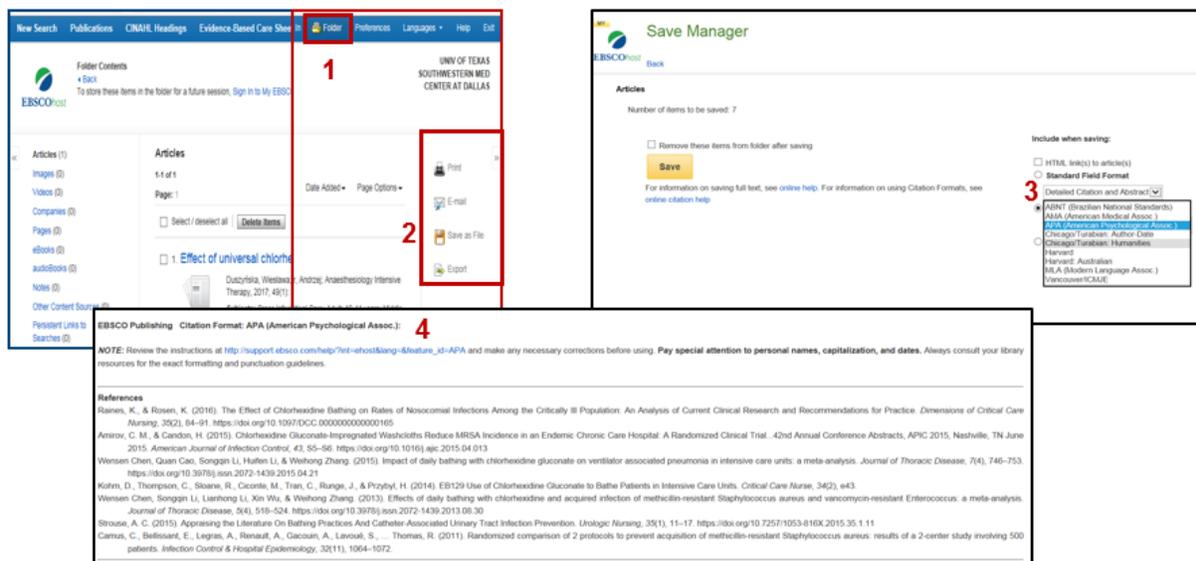


Click on “Retrieve Searches” or “Retrieve Alerts”.



Scroll through your list of searches. To view, click “Retrieve” or “Edit”.

## 5.5 Using CINAHL to Format Citations



1. Click the “Folder View” link to view the citations in your folder.
2. Select citations and click “Save as File” to open “Save Manager” page.
3. Use “Citation Format” dropdown menu to select citation format (i.e., APA, AMA, etc.).
4. Click “Save” to view citation list in selected style. Cut and paste into document.

### REFERENCES

EBSCOhost. (n.d.). CINAHL Complete. Retrieved February 24, 2020 from [http://support.ebsco.com/help/index.php?help\\_id=DB:937](http://support.ebsco.com/help/index.php?help_id=DB:937)

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