Conducting an Author Search in PubMed

Tip #1: A single author may publish under several name variants throughout his/her career. Therefore, in PubMed all variants of the author’s name should be considered for inclusion in the search statement to ensure that all publications are captured.

Figure 1: CV snapshot with author publication name variants

Figure 2: PubMed snapshot with author search statement entered including name variants. Use the [au] tag following the author’s name to conduct an author search. Use the quotation marks to keep the search from retrieving additional unwanted name variants (e.g., Just entering wright a [au] will retrieve wright a, wright ap, wright ag, wright al...etc. instead of just wright a, but using “wright a” [au] will retrieve just publications with the name wright a.) Use “OR” to connect multiple searches for a name.
Tip #2: You will likely need to go through all results that you retrieve using just the author name search. Knowing the author’s research area of publishing and common co-authors can help in identifying the accurate publications. Additionally you may follow the links to the full text if need to double check institution affiliation. This information is listed for all authors on the manuscript’s first page. As you will read about in the next section, using affiliation as a limit in your PubMed search can be problematic.

Tip #3: The records in PubMed for publications may or may not include all author affiliations in the record. There are many records which contain only the first author’s affiliation. Therefore, if you limit your search to institution affiliation you may miss publications if your faculty member was not the first author. PubMed, in recent years, started incorporating all author affiliations if that information was supplied to them by the publisher. However, as previously noted not all records have this information.

Figure 3: Example of a PubMed record showing only first author affiliation. If an author search was conducted for Dr. Wright and limited to University of Arizona affiliation then this publication would be missed.
Figure 4: For comparison to Figure 3, shown is an example of a PubMed record showing all authors’ affiliations.

Tip #4: An author may publish under variant names of their affiliation. Keep that in mind if conducting an affiliation search.

Figure 5: Example of a PubMed record pointing out the institution affiliation for a specific author.
Figure 6: Example of a PubMed record showing variant name used for institution affiliation for the same author as in Figure 5. Note, “University of Arizona” is not used but rather “Arizona Health Sciences Center” is used. Keep this in mind if you decide to limit your author search to affiliation. You should search by variant institution names or zip codes as well.

To conduct an affiliation search, type in the search term followed by the tag [ad]. Use quotation marks for phrases.

Figure 7: The screenshot shows an author search limited to affiliation where the first part of the search is the author name search including variants combined with “OR” and enclosed in parenthesis. Then the “AND” is used to connect the author name search with the second part of the search-the affiliation search. Notice some variant names for the affiliation are used in the example search statement.