



What are search filters and how and why do I use them?

Tieman JJ, Damarell R

Palliative and Supportive Services, Flinders University

Introduction

Searching for information is essential in healthcare. However, there can be many challenges finding literature and evidence for clinical decision making and for health activities such as guideline development and education and learning.

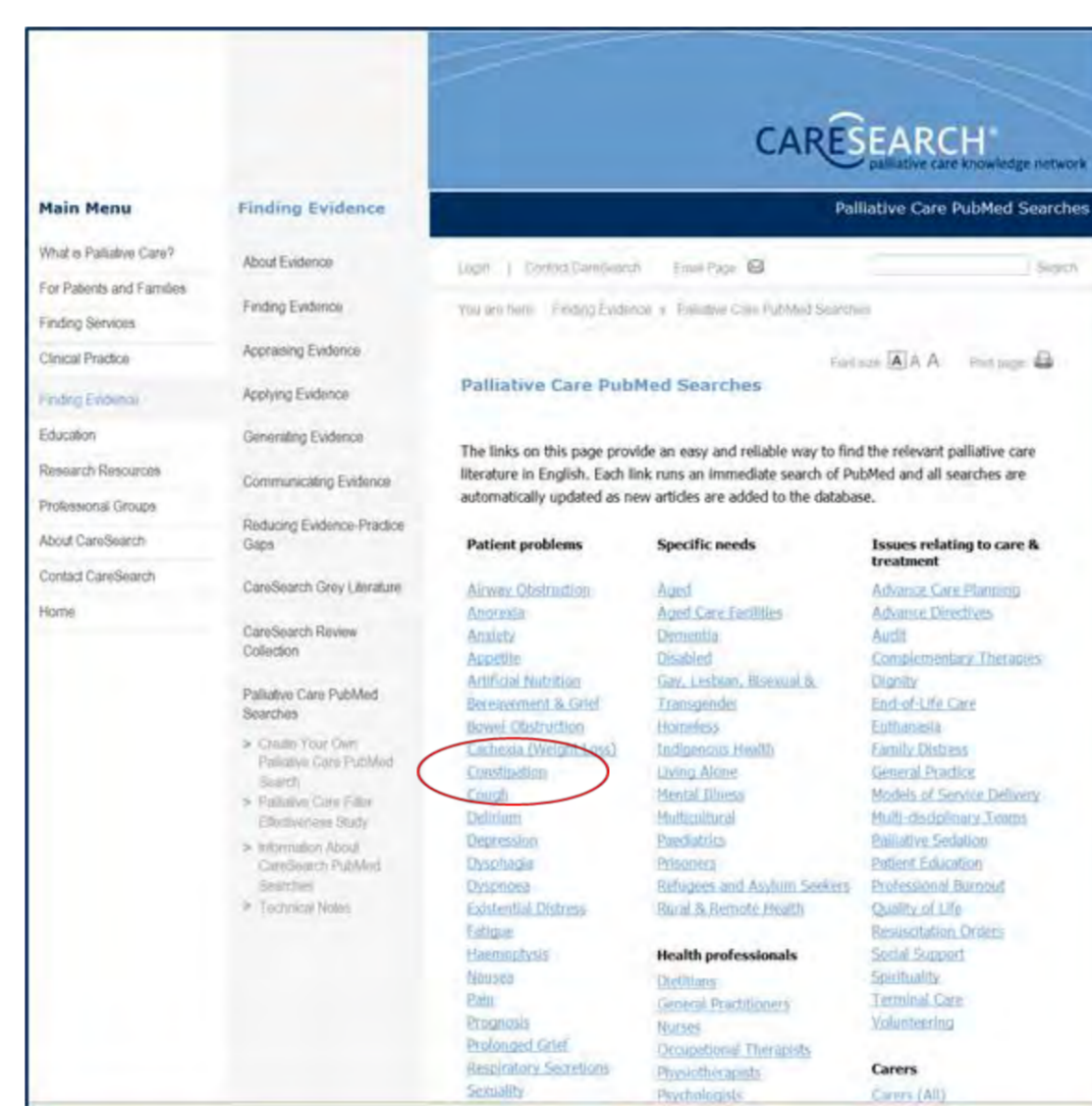


Imagine how easy it would be if there was a search that did not require you to have a registration, that was prewritten, and that was accurate in what it found and what it excluded. Now imagine that you could use this search by clicking on a hyperlink in a website.

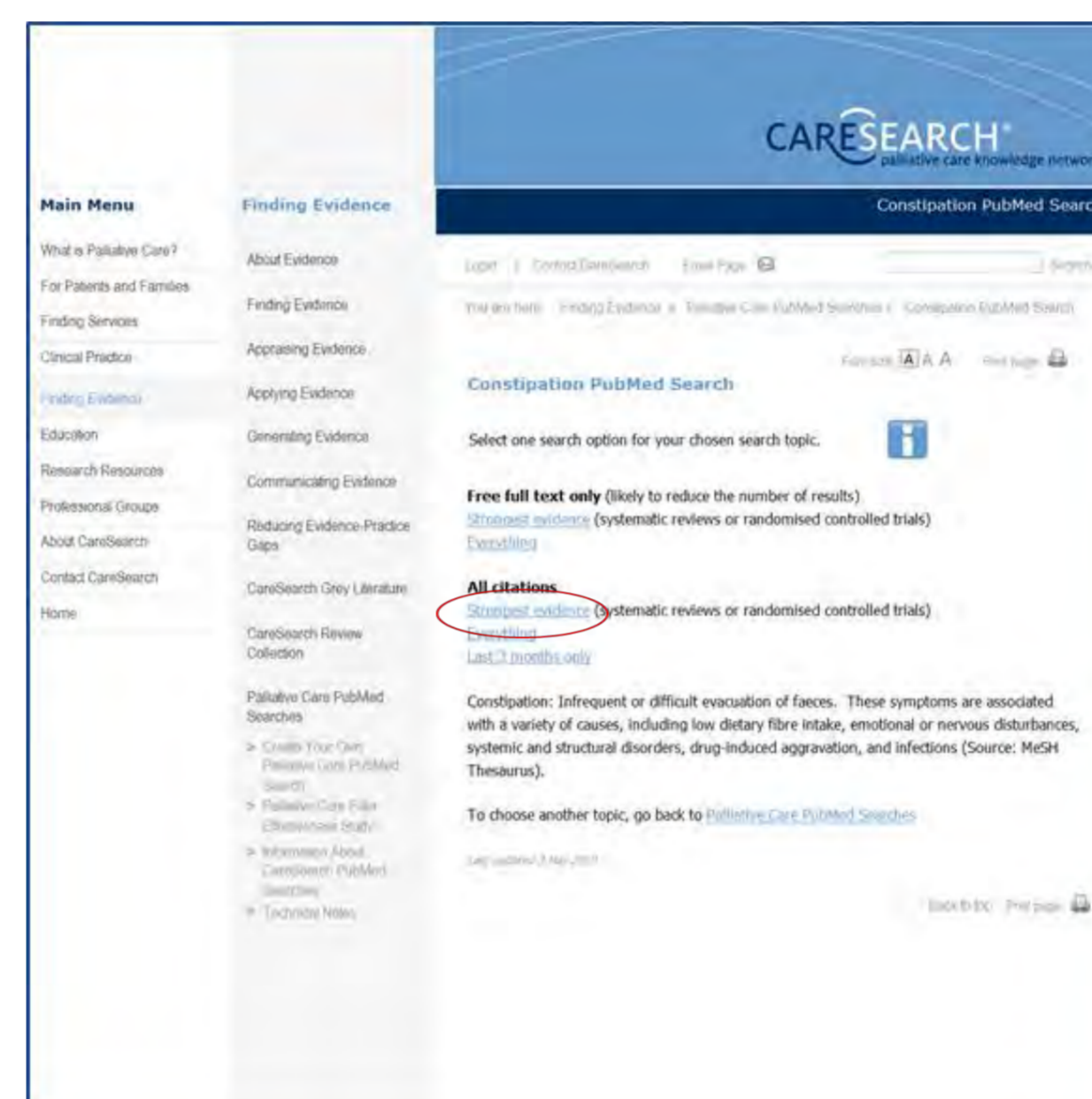
Search filters are one approach that can make this ideal search a reality.

CareSearch is undertaking world leading research in retrieving evidence and then making this knowledge available to health professionals, and to people who needing palliative care, their families, carers and friends.

As easy as 1-2-3 !

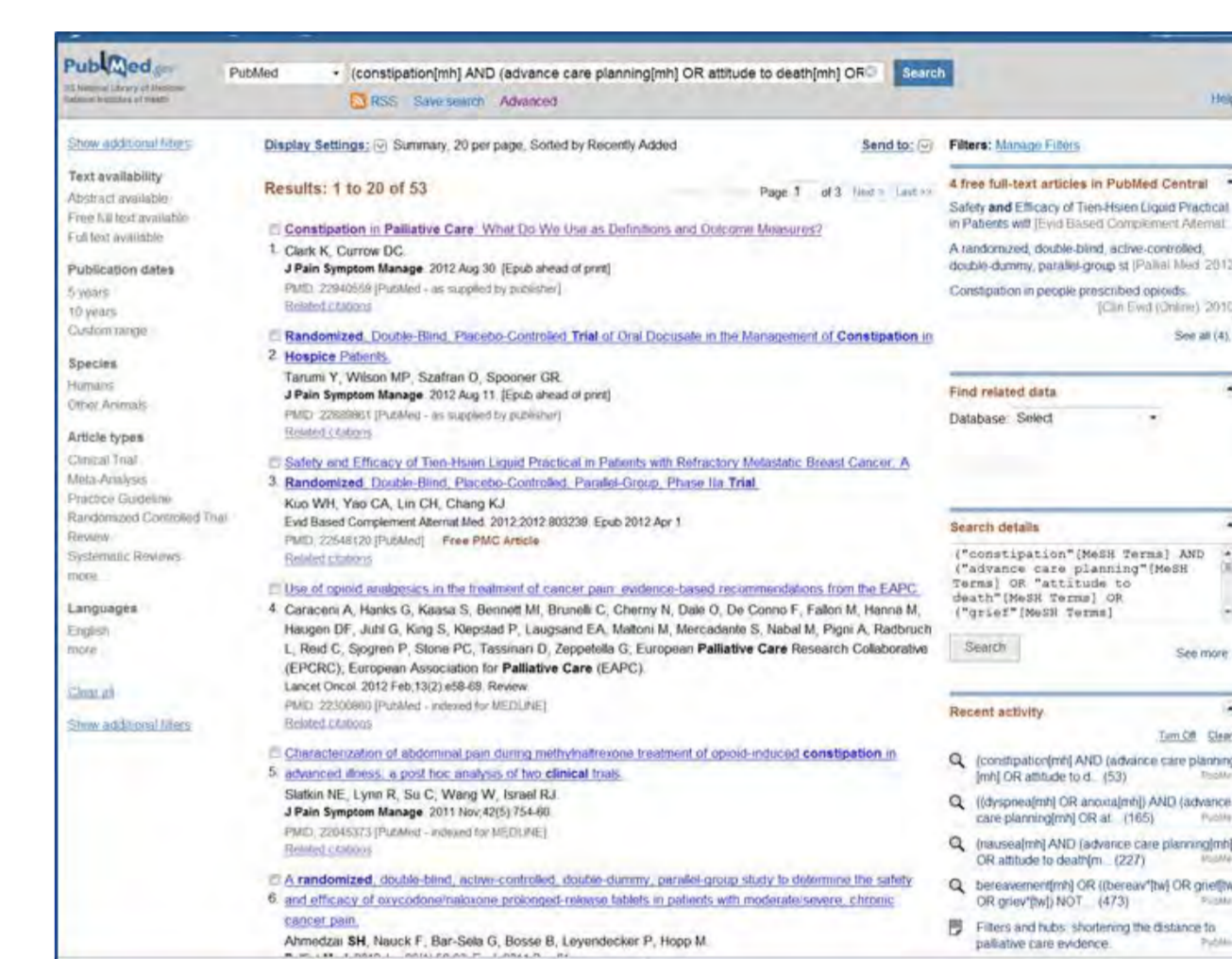


Step 1.
Select your topic from the list on the Palliative Care PubMed Searches page list.



Step 2.
Chose the level of evidence and whether you want free full text.

This example shows you how easy it is to find literature relating to constipation in the palliative care context.



Step 3.
View your PubMed results.

Aims

To develop search filters to retrieve literature relevant to palliative care

Methods

A search filter is an experimentally tested search strategy designed to retrieve literature on a particular topic, or with a specific study design, from all the articles held in a bibliographic database.

Search filters are developed using the best available research evidence about effective searching and follow a rigorous methodology. [1]

The methodology comprises four phases:

- Construction of a gold standard set of references of known relevance to the topic of interest
- Search term identification;
- Search filter development; and
- Translation and validation of the search filter for use in PubMed.

The technical work is informed by an Expert Advisory Group of clinicians, researchers and academics.

PubMed is a free to use bibliographic database that holds over 22 million items. By translating the search filters for use in PubMed, it is possible to create searches that are held as hyperlinks.

Discussion

Much of the needed biomedical literature is held in bibliographic databases. However, searching requires a detailed understanding of the technical issues associated with indexing, search construction, and the characteristics of different databases. Search filters embed the technical aspects of searching and have a known level of effectiveness.

Four CareSearch search filters have been developed using this methodology - palliative care search filter; heart failure search filter; lung cancer search filter; and residential aged care search filter. [2-4] They are therefore not only fast and easy to use but trustworthy in terms of what they find.

As the searches have been converted for use in PubMed, clicking on the hyperlink loads and runs the search in the PubMed database. This mean the search is continuously current.



As new articles are added to the database, the search filter will check to see if they are relevant.

The search filters have also been combined with topic searches such as breathless or depression.

A free full text option and a high level evidence option means that the use can further decide how many and what type of articles they want.

Conclusion

CareSearch has developed search filters which are easy-to-use, standardised shortcuts to high level evidence which can support better care and outcomes for patients and carers.

The search filters and the PubMed searches are free to use and available now in the Finding Evidence section of the CareSearch website.

References

1. Jenkins M: Evaluation of methodological search filters--a review. Health Info Libr J 2004, 21(3): 148-163.
2. Sladek R, Tieman J, Fazekas BS, Abernethy AP, Currow DC: Development of a subject search filter to find information relevant to palliative care in the general medical literature. J Med Libr Assoc 2006, 94(4): 394-401.
3. Damarell RA, Tieman J, Sladek RM, Davidson PM: Development of a heart failure filter for Medline: an objective approach using evidence-based clinical practice guidelines as an alternative to hand searching. BMC Med Res Methodol 2011, 11: 12.
4. Tieman JJ Filters and hubs: shortening the distance to palliative care evidence Australian Journal of Primary Health, 2012, 18, 268-273

