

“Out of the depths and into the shallows”

This handout summarises the key points from the above presentation.

General Approach

Unless you have well developed searching skills, we suggest that you:

- look for the highest level of evidence first (systematic reviews and evidence based guidelines)
- search for this evidence in reputable sources developed by those who have the appropriate skills, time, knowledge, confidence, support and training.

The five freely available websites below are useful places to start. A more extensive list of *databases and resources*, particularly relevant for palliative care (and including those listed below) can be found in the *Finding Evidence* pages at <http://www.caresearch.com.au/caresearch/FindingEvidence/>

PubMed Clinical Queries

PubMed is the largest bibliographic database in the biomedical sciences. Produced by the US National Library of Medicine, it indexes a wide range of peer review literature. The Clinical Queries function allows you to restrict your search topic to articles likely to be systematic reviews. Go to: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez> and select the Clinical Queries option from the left hand side tool bar.

CareSearch PubMed Topic Searches

CareSearch is an Australian website dedicated issue related to palliative care, including finding the best evidence. Its PubMed Topic Searches are a key feature offered to users. They provide immediate, real time searches of PubMed for over 50 topics particularly relevant to those working in palliative care, eg, dyspnoea, advanced care planning etc. Choose the *PubMed Topic Searches* option in the *Finding Evidence* pages at <http://www.caresearch.com.au/caresearch/FindingEvidence/>

CareSearch Review Collection

Another feature service available on the CareSearch website is its Review Collection. This set of references, organised on a topic by topic basis, identifies published reviews relevant to palliative care.. Choose the *CareSearch Review Collection* option in the *Finding Evidence* pages at <http://www.caresearch.com.au/caresearch/FindingEvidence/>

NLH Palliative and Support Care Specialist Library

This electronic library, focusing on palliative and supportive care, is produced in the United Kingdom. If you enter a search in the search box, it will sort its findings into several categories. Importantly, this includes guidelines and systematic reviews. It can be found at: <http://www.library.nhs.uk/palliative/>

TRIP database

It is tempting to search web engines such as Google. However often a search retrieves millions of hits, and it can be overwhelming. A better option is to search the TRIP database, which restricts your web search to 'evidence based sites'. In other words, it is more likely to take you to higher quality evidence. This useful resource can be found at: <http://www.tripdatabase.com>.

A word about Systematic Reviews and Evidence Based Guidelines

These publications have several defining features. Namely, they should:

- Use an explicit methodology (ie, be replicable)
- Include an exhaustive search for published and unpublished studies
- Appraise the quality of the studies they find, and include only the best quality ones in their findings.

Together, these features mean that the reported results are likely to represent the highest level of evidence. However, if the authors have not undertaken all these steps well, then it is possible that they could represent something quite opposite. Importantly, the results could then actually just compound the biases of the individual studies they include. The process of deciding whether you can trust the results of such publications, is known as 'critical appraisal'. While not covered in this presentation, further information about this step can be found by choosing *Appraising Evidence* in the Finding Evidence section at <http://www.caresearch.com.au/caresearch/FindingEvidence/>

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