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Publication Types and Other Limiting Strategies

WE often begin searching from a point of relative ignorance, unable to anticipate the intersection of MeSH terms and Text Words that will produce the most useful list of citations. MEDLINE is infinitely flexible, and several iterations of a search are often required. This chapter illustrates how to address the problem of sorting out the varying kinds of information that are produced by a search. Accordingly, it is organized by Publication Type, focusing on those that are most commonly used.

Publication Types are another means by which the indexers at the National Library of Medicine characterize each citation before it is entered into MEDLINE. *Unlike MeSH terms, Subheadings, and Supplementary Concepts, which describe the subject content of a citation, Publication Types describe the manner in which this subject content is conveyed or how it was studied*—as a letter, an editorial, or a clinical trial, for example. Some interfaces offer a pull-down menu choice of a half-dozen or so of the Publication Types that are most often used to limit a search. In PubMed, this is one of the Limits options. In addition, citations can be displayed in formats that contain links from the Publication Type(s). These links can be followed to learn more, or to modify your search strategy. Table 4-1 provides a sampling of Publication Types. Each of these is searchable in MEDLINE. Like other MeSH, their organization is hierarchical (see Chapter 3).