

Ask a Librarian!—August 2009

How do you find good quality information on complementary and alternative medicine, and why aren't all medical journals indexed in Medline? This month's installment answers those questions.

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This column addresses questions that clinicians commonly ask medical librarians, with the goals of providing information about the various resources offered by medical libraries and of promoting collaboration between PAs and medical librarians. Do you have a question for a medical librarian? Send your question to ask.a.librarian.jaapa@gmail.com.

Question: What are the best resources regarding the complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) literature? I have difficulty locating articles about CAM issues.

Answer: No need to Google for CAM literature—there are several reliable resources for this information, including some freely available. First, don't ignore Medline! After completing the search on your topic, use the Limits area (in either PubMed or Ovid) to select the subject subset "complementary medicine," which will limit your retrieval to articles in that area. Another resource developed by the National Institutes of Health exclusively for CAM literature is IBIDS [\[http://ods.od.nih.gov/Health Information/IBIDS.aspx\]](http://ods.od.nih.gov/Health%20Information/IBIDS.aspx) (International Bibliographic Information on Dietary Supplements). It offers both peer reviewed and consumer literature, and you can search for either or both. Use the "Help & FAQs" link for searching tips. MedlinePlus, [\[http://medlineplus.gov/\]](http://medlineplus.gov/) which we've mentioned previously, is a great resources for your patients. Click on the Drugs & Supplements link in the left side menu. And for those of you affiliated with institutions, look for subscriptions to these two respected resources: Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database and Natural Standard. These offer a wealth of referenced information on the world of CAM.

Question: Why are some journals in Medline and some not?

Answer: Medline [\[http://www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/factsheets/medline.html\]](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/factsheets/medline.html) (Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online) is the bibliographic database from the NLM, the National Library of Medicine [\[http://www.nlm.nih.gov/\]](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/). Journals are selected for inclusion based on recommendations from the Literature Selection Technical Review Committee (LSTRC), a group created by the National Institutes of Health.

Decisions about indexing or rejecting specific journals are made collaboratively by the NLM director, the NLM board of regents, and the LSTRC. The review committee meets three times a year and considers approximately 140 titles at each meeting. Areas of

emphasis in evaluating journals for possible inclusion in Medline include scope and coverage, quality of content, editorial work, production quality, audience, and types of content. The NLM describes “health professionals” as its intended area of focus for Medline. This category includes physicians, nurses, dentists, veterinarians, and the many types of allied health professionals in the research and health care delivery systems.

For more information about the process of journal selection for Medline, consult the Medline Journal Selection Fact Sheet.

[\[http://www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/factsheets/jsel.html\]](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/factsheets/jsel.html)

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