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The NHS Evidence home page, www.evidence.nhs.uk looks like this:
What this website is

NHS Evidence provides access to a comprehensive evidence base for clinical staff and decision makers in health and social care. It has been developed by the National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) and incorporates some of the key components from the former National Library for Health (NLH).

As well as providing evidence relating to healthcare and the use of medicines, NHS Evidence includes information relating to social care and public health.

NHS Evidence provides a simple search function for users to access information from a variety of reliable sources using a single search box. It differs from the old NLH website in that it does not allow searching of sources individually. However, the results from an NHS Evidence search can be ‘filtered’ to show those from an individual source.

NHS Evidence also provides access to specialist resources previously available through NLH, for example specialist collections (previously called specialist libraries), advanced healthcare databases (including Medline and Embase) and access to full text books and journals. To access these NHS-funded electronic resources, users must register for an NHS Athens username and password (see below).

How to register

You can search NHS Evidence without a password. You need an NHS Athens username and password in order to access full-text books and journals and to search advanced healthcare databases such as Medline and Embase. Once registered, you can access these resources from any computer with internet access.

Users within the ‘NHS family’ are eligible for an NHS Athens username and password. The term NHS Family is used to describe staff working for or delivering services on behalf of, or in conjunction with the NHS. This includes all registered pharmacists.

To register, go to the NHS Evidence home page and click on ‘Conduct a Specialist Search’ at the top of the screen. Choose ‘Login to Athens’ from the drop-down menu and follow the on-screen instructions. If you are unsure whether you qualify for an NHS Athens username and password, click on ‘Check if you are eligible’ on the left hand side of the screen.

After registering, you will receive your password by email. If you register using an NHS email address, this is normally within a couple of days; if you use a non-NHS email address it may take up to 15 days.

North West Medicines Information Centre
June 2009
How to find information using NHS Evidence

Searching NHS Evidence

NHS Evidence provides a single search to access information from a variety of sources.

To conduct a search:
1. Type your search term(s) in the search box
2. Click on ‘Search’

Choosing search terms

NHS Evidence has some features to improve searching. Click on ‘Search help’ underneath the search box for examples.

Think of the information you are looking for when choosing your search terms. If your search brings up too many hits, you can make the search more specific by adding more search terms.

- If you enter more than one term in the search box, NHS Evidence will search for documents that contain all those words.
- You can use the Boolean operator NOT to specify searches that do not include a search term (e.g. to find information on metformin for polycystic ovaries it may be helpful to use the term NOT diabetes).
- You can use the Boolean operator OR to find articles that contain either term (e.g. lactation OR breastfeeding).
- To find phrases, type them in speech marks (e.g. “cluster headache”).
- To find words with the same stem but different endings you can use a ‘wildcard’ by typing * (e.g. pregnan* will search for pregnant and pregnancy).
Example

You have been asked if verapamil is a suitable treatment for cluster headache.

Type the search terms verapamil and “cluster headache” into the search box and then click on ‘Search’.

Looking at the results

Using our example above (verapamil and “cluster headache”), the results screen looks like this:

- What you searched for
- How hits are arranged (relevance or date)
- The hits
- Filters to refine your search
Changing the way results are presented

Towards the top of the screen you will see what you searched for and the number of hits that have been found.

You can choose to view between 10 and 50 hits per page. It can be useful to present the hits in as few pages as possible so that you can view them more quickly.

The hits are listed down the centre of the page. For details of how each hit is presented, see below.

Hits are automatically arranged in relevance order with the most ‘relevant’ hit at the top. You can choose to view the hits in date order with the most recent hit at the top. To do this click on ‘sort these results by date’.

Relevance vs. date order

NHS Evidence gives each hit a rating for relevance. This rating takes into account factors such as how frequently the search terms appear and where they appear (for example, occurrences in the title or abstract are considered more important than in the full text article). Results are also ranked according to a relative hierarchy of evidence (for example, guidelines are considered more relevant than primary research articles).

In NHS Evidence it is often most helpful to sort the hits by relevance.

Viewing hits in date order is useful when you are looking for news or current awareness articles so that you can identify which articles are the most recent. Although NHS Evidence includes up to date guidelines, it is not the best place to look for current awareness articles such as MHRA safety alerts and recently published clinical studies and editorials. These, and other articles such as press releases and position statements (from organisations such as the RPSGB, PSNC and Royal Colleges), can be found by searching the National electronic Library for Medicines (NeLM) at www.nelm.nhs.uk.

How each hit is presented

For each hit you can see:

- Title (Click on the title to view the whole document)
- Brief summary (in most cases)
- Source of evidence and date

When deciding if a hit will be useful for you, look at the source. This tells you who the information is by and the type of document it is. The source can sometimes be more helpful than the title.
Looking at the hits from our example search, verapamil and “cluster headache”, we can see the titles and sources below:

1. What is the evidence for verapamil for prevention of cluster headache?

   Source: Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effects (published 2004)

2. Cluster headache

   Source: BNF (published 2009)

3. Cluster headache: review of the literature

   Source: Medicines Q&A document from NeLM (published 2008)

Using filters to refine the results

You can use the categories listed on the left hand side of the results screen to reduce the number of relevant hits you have. The categories are called ‘result filters’ or ‘navigators’.

Filters are divided into five sections:

- **Area of interest**
  - e.g. clinical, public health, social care

- **Type of information**
  - e.g. guidelines, policies, drug information

- **Clinical query**
  - e.g. diagnosis, therapy

- **Source**
  - e.g. BNF, NICE, Department of Health (DH), National electronic Library for Medicines (NeLM), New Drugs Online database (NDO)
  - Sources are listed as acronyms. Point your cursor at each for the full name.

- **Medicines and Devices**
  - e.g. aspirin, verapamil (individual drug names)
Example

You have been asked which patients sibutramine is recommended for in the management of obesity.

(NB: To find information about sibutramine such as indications and contraindications, we could look at the BNF or the Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC). But to find information about the recommended use of sibutramine, guidelines may be more helpful.)

Search NHS Evidence using the terms sibutramine and obesity.

This brings up more than 200 hits:

Click on the filter ‘Guidelines’ to bring up those 24 hits that have been categorised as guidelines:
The filter you have chosen is shown here. To remove the filter, click on the blue box.

If you apply more filters they will be shown here.

Looking at the sources, you can see who produced the guidelines that are available.

(NB: Point your cursor over the acronyms to see what they stand for)

Click on a filter to apply it.

For example, click on the filter ‘CKS’ to bring up the 4 Clinical Knowledge Summaries:

We have now applied two filters

Look at the titles to choose the relevant guideline.

To view the document you want, click on the title.
Sources of evidence

NHS Evidence provides access to resources from a variety of sources. Useful sources for information about medicines include:

- Guidelines from national bodies such as NICE, SIGN and CKS
- Information from the BNF
- Documents from the Cochrane database
- Medicines Q&A documents from the NeLM website
- New product evaluations from the NeLM website
- Monographs from the UKMi New Drugs Online database (see below)

New Drugs Online (NDO)

NHS Evidence provides access to the NDO database, which was previously only available to registered users. NDO is a database of information about drugs in development and is maintained by UKMi pharmacists.

Information is currently available on over 1200 drugs in development, including data on licence extensions and new formulations of marketed drugs. NDO also contains links to independent evaluated information, where available, for drugs pre-launch and up to two years post-launch.

NDO drug monographs can be accessed by searching NHS Evidence.

Example

You have been asked for information about a medicine that is in development.

- Type the name of the drug or condition it is being developed for in the NHS Evidence search box and click on ‘Search’
- This will bring up a list of hits.
- To reduce your results to those from the NDO database, click on the NDO filter on the left hand side of the screen.
- Click on the title of the hit you want to view. This will bring up the NDO entry.

NDO entries look like this (see next page):
### Drug name and brand name (if known)

### BNF category

### Therapeutic class

### Indication

### Stage of development

### Further information and trial data

The NDO database can also be used to provide reports for horizon scanning. This function is not available through NHS Evidence but NHS staff with responsibility for budget setting and resource planning can register for it. To register, and for further information on NDO, click on the link at the top left hand corner of any NDO monograph, or go to [www.ukmi.nhs.uk/applications/NDO/](http://www.ukmi.nhs.uk/applications/NDO/).

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**How to use NHS Evidence to access other resources**

The following resources were previously available through the National Library for Health (NLH) and may move to NHS Evidence in the future. For now, they can be accessed via the ‘Conduct a specialist search’ link on the NHS Evidence.
• **Specialist collections**

Some of the information in NHS evidence is arranged into Specialist Collections. The collections are being developed from ‘Specialist libraries’ available on the National Library for Health. They provide access to reliable sources of evidence covering a particular area. There are currently 34 specialist collections covering various therapeutic areas (e.g. diabetes), patient groups (e.g. child health) and healthcare services (e.g. emergency and urgent care).

To access the specialist collections, click on ‘Conduct a Specialist Search’ on the NHS Evidence home page then select ‘Search Specialist Collections’ from the drop-down menu. You can then choose the specialist collection you require.

• **Databases (e.g. Medline and Embase)**

Bibliographic databases such as Medline and Embase provide access to individual published studies and journal articles. In many cases you will not need to look for these types of documents because you will be able to find information that has already been evaluated (e.g. evidence-based reviews or guidelines). Always check for evaluated information first.

If you do need to use the databases, you must first register for an NHS Athens username and password. To see if you are eligible and to register, click on ‘Conduct a Specialist Search’ on the NHS Evidence home page then choose ‘Login to Athens’ and follow the on-screen instructions.

To access the databases, click on ‘Conduct a Specialist Search’ on the NHS Evidence home page then select ‘Search Specialist Databases (HDAS)’ from the drop-down menu. You will be asked to enter your NHS Athens username and password.

• **Full text journal articles**

Access to some online books and journals is available to NHS staff through NHS Evidence.

You need an NHS Athens username and password to access these resources. To see if you are eligible and to register, click on ‘Conduct a Specialist Search’ on the NHS Evidence home page then choose ‘Login to Athens’ and follow the on-screen instructions.

To access full text journal articles, click on ‘Conduct a Specialist Search’ on the NHS Evidence home page then select ‘Books and Journals’ from the drop-down menu.

Click on ‘Athens login’ in the top right hand corner of the screen and enter your username and password.

Scroll down the screen and click on ‘My journals’. This will bring up the journal search page and a brief user guide.