A guide to using the National electronic Library for Medicines [www.nelm.nhs.uk](http://www.nelm.nhs.uk)

This guide is for medicines management and other healthcare professionals in primary care and secondary care. It aims to help users navigate NeLM effectively to find useful information about medicines.

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The National electronic Library for Medicines (NeLM) homepage, [www.nelm.nhs.uk](http://www.nelm.nhs.uk), looks like this:

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The National electronic Library for Medicines Information Centre  
September 2010  
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What this website is

The National electronic Library for Medicines (NeLM) is the largest medicines information portal for NHS healthcare professionals in the UK. It aims to promote the safe, effective and efficient use of medicines.

The website provides access to information about and relating to the use of medicines. Types of information available include news and current awareness articles, evidence-based documents such as Medicines Q&As and new drug evaluations, horizon scanning resources and drug alerts. These are described more fully later in this document. NeLM also provides access to medicines management references previously indexed in the Pharmline database.

NeLM links to information from a variety of sources such as the Cochrane library, professional organisations and NHS bodies. Some of the content of NeLM is provided by the UK Medicines Information (UKMi) network; the website is maintained by UKMi staff in London.

NeLM is updated daily; users can register to be notified of new content in a daily email. Some sections of NeLM are available only to registered users.

When to use NeLM

NeLM provides access to variety of different types of documents, from a number of sources. This makes it a useful place to look to find information to answer a number of different types of question about medicines.

NeLM is particularly useful to find news and current awareness articles. Use it to see if there is something recently published on the topic you are interested in, for example an MHRA warning, major new trial or national guidance.

NeLM is also useful for finding the following types of information:

- Medicines Q&A articles.
- To see if a medicine has been launched or discontinued.
- To find recent drug alerts.
- To find evaluations of medicines and to access horizon scanning resources.
- National guidelines.

Information is continually being added to NeLM from a variety of sources; if you are looking for information about a medicine and don’t know where to start, try NeLM.

Website content

Information in NeLM is grouped into NeLM areas, each area relating to a different type of information, for example News and Evidence. Each NeLM Area except news is divided into smaller sections.

Most sections are freely available but some are password protected with access restricted to registered users. Notable sections available only to registered users are Horizon Scanning and Evidence reviews for Individual Funding Requests.

The most useful sections of NeLM are described below. Information about how to access these resources and how to search NeLM is provided later in this guide.

The following NeLM sections are freely available:
News

News articles are published on NeLM each weekday in the NeLM area ‘News’. The most recently added articles are also listed on the NeLM home page.

National electronic Library for Medicines

News articles are collected from a wide variety of sources. These include:

- Medical journals (e.g. BMJ, Lancet, New England Journal of Medicine)
- Lay media (e.g. BBC Health News)
- Professional organisations (e.g. Royal Pharmaceutical Society, Royal College of Ophthalmologists)
- Department of Health
- UK, European and other regulatory agencies
- NHS and related organisations (e.g. NHS Primary Care Contracting, NHS Business Services Authority, National Patient Safety Agency, National Prescribing Centre)
- Independent organisations (e.g. Kings Fund)
- Medicines Information databases (e.g. Medusa)
- NICE and other bodies that issue guidance

Each news item is provided as a written summary, usually with a link to the original source. In some cases the source may not be freely available, in which case the entry will say so.

How to search for news articles

See ‘How to search NeLM’ later in this guide.

How to receive the news by email:

Registered users of NHS can receive news articles in a daily email. See ‘Newsletter subscriptions’ later in this guide.

Evidence resources

The evidence area of NeLM contains different types of documents. To see the types of information available click on ‘Evidence’:

North West Medicines Information Centre
September 2010

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This will bring up a box listing the types of documents available:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Horizon Scanning)</td>
<td>Medication Safety</td>
<td>Critically Appraised Trials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidelines</td>
<td>Complementary Medicine</td>
<td>Reviews for Individual Funding Requests (IFRs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Specific Reviews</td>
<td>Medicines Q&amp;A</td>
<td>Medicines Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Class Focused Reviews</td>
<td>Drug Monitoring</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Disease Focused Reviews</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The most recently added articles in the Evidence area are also listed on the NeLM homepage.

**Medicines Q&As**

Medicines Q&As are evidence-based answers to medicines-related questions. They are prepared by medicines information pharmacists in the UK and undergo a stringent quality control process before being published on the website.

There are over 200 Medicines Q&As on the website and more are added every month. They relate to all aspects of medicines use including adverse effects, drug interactions, use in pregnancy and breastfeeding, drug supply and legislation. Examples include:

- Equivalent doses of oral morphine to other opioids in primary care.
- Can AIIRAs be used if angioedema occurred with an ACEI?
- Stability of clopidogrel tablets in monitored dosage systems.
- Switching between tricyclic, SSRI and related antidepressants.
- Fish oil supplements in dyslexia – is there evidence of benefit?

If you are looking to answer a medicines-related question, finding a relevant Medicines Q&A article can save you a lot of work.

**Drug Specific Reviews**

This section provides access to evaluations of medicines, including documents produced by:

- UKMi
- London New Drugs Group
- National Prescribing Centre
- Scottish Medicines Consortium
- Cochrane Library
- Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin (links to abstracts only)

Hint: If you are looking for a review published before a drug is launched, also look at the Horizon Scanning section; see 'Resources for registered users' later in this guide.

**Drug Class Focused reviews and Disease Focused Reviews**

This section provides access to reviews of more than one drug in the same class and reviews of treatments for specific conditions, e.g. ACEIs and AIIRAs for hypertension, dopamine agonist therapy in early Parkinson’s disease.

They include documents such as:

- London New Drugs Group reviews
- NHS Heath Technology Assessments
- Cochrane reviews and DARE abstracts

Hint: if you are looking for a review like this, check both the drug class focused reviews and disease focused reviews sections.
Medicines Management

This section contains abstracts and bibliographic details of papers relating to medicines management, prescribing and pharmacy practice. There are over 60,000 items, including relevant articles previously indexed in the Pharmline database. References are from the medical and healthcare literature.

Use the search function to identify articles that will be useful to you. Items in the Medicines Management section are indexed with keywords in order to make it easier to identify relevant articles. See ‘How to search NeLM’ later in this guide.

Each item provides a brief summary or abstract with a link to the website of the relevant journal. Some items link to the full-text article; you can also obtain journal articles via your local NHS library.

Selected resources in other NeLM areas

The following resources are just some of those available via NeLM. The examples below have been chosen as they are useful for a wide range of users.

NICE Bites
(In the NeLM area ‘Health In Focus’)

NICE Bites summarises the key prescribing points from NICE Technology Appraisals and Clinical Guidelines. Each edition is two pages long and is intended to provide healthcare professionals with a clear and succinct summary that can be used to help in the implementation of NICE recommendations.

Thinking Ahead
(In the NeLM area ‘Health In Focus’)

Thinking Ahead is a resource document for specific health events and seasonal conditions that may have a public health impact. Each edition focuses on a different topic and provides links to relevant resources including guidelines, evidence-based reviews and information for patients.

As well as being located in the ‘Health In Focus’ section of NeLM, the latest edition of NICE Bites or Thinking Ahead is also shown towards the top of the NeLM home page (under the heading ‘Health In Focus’).

Drug alerts
(In the NeLM area ‘Other Library Updates’)

Drugs alerts (but not drug device alerts) issued in the UK are included in NeLM in the ‘Other Library Updates’ section. Drug alerts are issued by the MHRA but are easier to find on NeLM than on the MHRA website.

As well as being located in the 'Other Library Updates' section of NeLM, recently issued drug alerts are also shown in a shaded area towards the top of the NeLM home page.

SPC changes
(In the NeLM area ‘Other Library Updates’)

Information in this section relates to changes in Summaries of Product Characteristics (SPCs) and comes mainly from the electronic Medicines Compendium and from drug manufacturers. This section is useful if you are looking to see if a drug has a new indication; some drug launches and discontinuations are also included. Hint: when looking for information about medicines launched or discontinued, also check the News section.

The following NeLM sections are only available for registered users:
Website content for registered users

Some resources in NeLM are available only to registered users. The two most useful sections restricted to registered users are Horizon Scanning and Reviews for Individual Funding Requests (IFRs), both of which are in the Evidence section.

How to register

See 'How to register' later in this guide.

How to log in

To log in, click on login then enter your username and password. These padlocks will be removed.

Hint: Some sections of NeLM are restricted to specific groups of users and remain padlocked, even after logging in.

Welcome indicates you have logged in

Padlock has been removed
Horizon Scanning resources

Horizon scanning focuses on medicines in development. Information in this section includes evaluations of medicines produced before product launch and other resources from the London New Drugs Group, UKMi and National Prescribing Centre.

The Horizon Scanning section of NeLM also provides direct links to Prescribing Outlook resources and the New Drugs Online database.

To access the Horizon Scanning section of NeLM you must first log in. Then click on the NeLM area ‘Evidence’ and select ‘Horizon Scanning’. Like other sections of NeLM, articles are listed down the centre of the screen, with the most recent at the top. There are separate links to Prescribing Outlook resources and the New Drugs Online database:

Prescribing Outlook

Prescribing Outlook is a three-part suite of resources, published annually:

- ‘Prescribing Outlook – New Medicines’ gives information on drugs with market launches planned in the next 12-18 months and their likely impact on services and budgets.
- ‘Prescribing Outlook – National Developments’ estimates the impact of national guidance such as NICE guidelines and the outcome of major clinical trials on clinical practice and prescribing budgets. It is intended to inform discussions between commissioners and providers, and highlight issues around implementation of national guidance.
- ‘Prescribing Outlook – Cost Calculator’ is an excel spreadsheet that can be used as an aid in the budget setting process.

To access these resources, click on the link to Prescribing Outlook then select the document you want.
New Drugs Online database

New Drugs Online (NDO) is a searchable database of information about medicines from late phase II clinical trials to product launch. The database is maintained by UKMi pharmacists. Information is currently available on over 1200 drugs in development, including 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 monographs are freely accessible via the NHS Evidence website (www.evidence.nhs.uk). Other functions, such as producing reports for horizon scanning are only available to registered users. To access NDO via NeLM, separate registration is required.

To access NDO via NeLM, click on the link in the Horizon Scanning section. You will see a screen like this:

![Register screen](image)

Once you have registered and logged in, follow the onscreen instructions to browse or search the database. There is a user guide available; after you have logged in click on the question mark in the top right corner of the screen, then click on the link to the user guide.

Hint: The NDO database is separate from NeLM. You cannot use the search box on NeLM to find the information in NDO.

Evaluations for Individual Funding Requests (IFRs)

This section contains evidence reviews produced for individual funding requests (IFRs). The evidence reviews are independent literature searches and evaluations undertaken to support Primary Care Trusts considering IFRs. They have been written by regional Medicines Information centres principally in the South East.

To access the evaluations you must first log in to NeLM. Then click on the NeLM area ‘Evidence’ and select ‘Evaluations for IFRs’. Like other sections of NeLM, articles are listed down the centre of the screen, with the most recent at the top.

You can be notified of newly published IFR evidence reviews as part of a NeLM daily email newsletter. See ‘Newsletter subscriptions’ later in this guide.
How to find information on NeLM

How information is arranged

Information on the website is grouped in two main ways:

- by ‘NeLM area’ (the type of information it is), and
- by ‘Category’ (the speciality or clinical area the information relates to).

All items are allocated an area; most items are also assigned to one or more NeLM categories.

For example, the Medicines Q&A document, Antioxidants and zinc for age-related macular degeneration is in the following:

- NeLM area  Evidence > Medicines Q&A
- Category  BNF category > 9.5.4 zinc, 9.6.1 vitamin A, 9.6.3 vitamin C
- Category  BNF category > 11 Eye
- Category  Medical specialty > Ophthalmology

NeLM area

If you know the type of document you want (for example, a ‘Medicines Q&A’ or a New Medicines Profile) you can go directly to the appropriate NeLM area. See ‘How to view articles’ below. Also, the home page shows the most recent articles published in the News, Evidence and Medicines Management sections.

NeLM Category

You can search NeLM and then restrict the results to get to a specific NeLM area or Category. Not all items have a category assigned but most do.

See ‘How to search NeLM’ later in this guide.

Medicines A-Z

Information on the website is also coded according to relevant drug names. You can use the ‘Medicines A-Z’ function to find information relating to specific medicines. See ‘Using the Medicines A-Z function’ later in this guide.

How to view articles

If you know the type of article you want, go to the appropriate NeLM Area. For example, to see articles in the news area choose the NeLM area ‘news’ towards the top of the screen.
This will bring up a list of articles, with the most recent at the top:

For each article you can see:
- Title of item in blue—click on this for the full item (see below).
- Source: The origin of the item, e.g. Department of Health, British Medical Journal, Reuters news agency.
- Date published – this is the date the article was added to NeLM.
- Summary (if you have clicked on display summaries – see the picture above)
- Category – which category areas of NeLM the article is in e.g. BNF category.
- NeLM Area – which areas of NeLM the article is in e.g. news.
- If there are links to further documents, these are shown.

Looking at individual entries
Click on the title of the article you want, to see a full summary.
Summaries are written by UKMi pharmacists; there is usually a link to the original source of information.
Some articles have attachments or links. If so, they are underneath the summary. Click on an icon to open the attachment or link.

This icon shows a link to a webpage
This icon shows a link to a pdf document
This icon shows a link to a word document

Some entries have the facility for users to post comments on them – you must be logged in to do this. Your name and comment will be displayed in the box underneath the article summary.

At the bottom of each article are links to related articles from the Evidence and News sections of NeLM.

How to search NeLM

The NeLM search engine searches the title and abstract of each item for the search terms you use. Items in some sections of NeLM (notably Medicines Management) are also indexed with keywords; the search engine searches keywords too.

Choosing search terms

The NeLM search engine allows searching in the following ways.

- Multiple words
  If you enter two or more terms in the search box, NeLM will search for documents that contain both or all those words. There is no need to type AND in between them. 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.

- OR
  You can use the Boolean operator OR to find articles that contain either term (e.g. foot OR feet).

- Phrases
  To find phrases, type them in speech marks (e.g. “cluster headache”).

- Words with different endings
  To find words with the same stem but different endings, type the word stem in the search box (e.g. pregnan will search for pregnant and pregnancy).

NeLM is not able to find the following:

- Words with different beginnings
  NeLM searches for words that start the same as your search terms. (e.g. statin will search for statin, statins, and stating; it will NOT search for simvastatin.

- Mis-spelled words
  The NeLM search engine will not correct words that are mis-spelled. Be careful to type search terms accurately.

- Synonyms
  The NeLM search engine will not suggest synonyms. If there is more than one term with the same or similar meaning, consider using them with OR. (e.g. lactation OR breastfeeding OR “breast feeding”)
Conducting a search:

1. Type your search term(s) in the search box on the home page
2. Click on ‘Search’

Looking at the results

E.g. search for ezetimibe. Your results will look something like this:

Hits are listed by NeLM area in this yellow results box
Total number of hits
What you searched for

Underneath the yellow results box, all the results are listed with the most recent at the top:
Most recent hit listed at the top

Changing the way results are presented

Order of results

You can change the order of results but choosing one of the ‘sort by’ options underneath the yellow results box. It is usually better to leave the results as they are with the most recent at the top.

Summaries

You can choose to see the summaries for each of the hits. Select ‘Yes’ in the ‘Display summary’ box.

Narrowing down the results

You can narrow down your search in three ways:

- By NeLM area
- By Date
- By Category
Narrowing results by NeLM area

The yellow results box lists hits according to the NeLM area they are in. NeLM areas with results that match your search are shown in blue with the number of hits in brackets (in this example you can see there is one Medicines Q&A). NeLM areas shown in grey do not contain any hits for your search.

Click on the one you want. This will reduce your results to just those articles that are in the NeLM area you choose.

Using NeLM areas to narrow down your search is very helpful if you know the type of information you want e.g. Medicines Q&A, News article or Medicines Management references and abstracts.

Narrowing results by Date

You can restrict your results to a particular year or month. To do this, click on the year you want in the ‘Filter results by’ box on the left hand side of the screen:

Select a year.
You will then be able to select a month
(Filter by month is not available for Medicines Management articles published before 2003)

This facility can be useful if you are looking for a specific reference or news item and know when it was published.

Filters applied are shown under the yellow results box:
Narrowing results by Category

You can restrict your results to a particular category. There are four broad categories, each of which is divided into smaller categories. The categories are:

- **BNF Category**
- **Medical Specialty** – e.g. cardiovascular medicine, mental health, paediatrics
- **Medicines Information** - e.g. drug interactions, drugs in pregnancy
- **National Health Service** - e.g. community pharmacy, general practice, public health, prescribing and supply of medicines

You can only select one category at a time; you get the choice of subcategories, some of which are divided into smaller categories still. To select a category, choose one in the ‘Filter results by’ box on the left hand side of the screen. You will then get the chance to select a subcategory.

Filter results by: [Select a category. You will then be able to select a subcategory]

Filters applied are shown under the yellow results box:

Hints for searching

- Choose your search terms carefully, thinking about what you are hoping to find. Consider if there are other terms that might have been used. E.g. cholesterol OR lipid; serotonin OR 5HT.
- Check your spelling. If you mis-spell a word NeLM will not correct it for you.
- Don’t use too many filters or too many search terms. If you can’t find what you’re looking for, you might be narrowing down your search too much.
- Not all articles have Categories assigned to them. Categories are assigned by humans; they can be subjective.
- Searching NeLM does **not** search the New Drugs Online (NDO) database.
Using the Medicines A-Z function

You can find information relating to a specific drug by using the ‘Medicines A-Z’ function.

You can search Medicines A-Z using a brand name or generic name. If you use a brand name you will later be asked to select the relevant generic name.

To find the medicine you want:

1. Click on ‘Generic name’ or ‘Brand name’ depending on the search you are doing.
2. Start typing the medicine name in the search box. Do not press Enter.
3. You will see a list of medicines in the box under the search box. These relate to what you have typed. Depending on the speed of your internet connection, it may take a few seconds for this list to appear.

For example, use Medicines A-Z to find information on Dianette, click on 'Brand name' then type Dianette in the search box. You will then see the list of preparations to choose from:

4. Click on the medicine you want from this list. If you searched using a brand name, when you click on the one you want, this will bring up a second box to the right that contains a list of relevant generic medicines (including combinations of generic medicines).

5. Select the generic name you want.

6. This will conduct a search of NeLM for the term you have chosen.

**Using NeLM to access other resources**

*New Drugs Online database*

See ‘Horizon Scanning' earlier in this guide.
Registered users

Some of the information on NeLM is password protected and you will need to register in order to see it. You will also need to register if you want to receive email newsletters alerting you to new NeLM content. Healthcare professionals are entitled to register for a username and password.

How to register

To register, click on ‘Register’ on the top right hand side of the screen. This will bring up an online form for you to complete. Your NHS email address will be used as your username and you can choose your own password. If you do not have an NHS email address you can request registration by clicking the relevant link.

You will be given the opportunity to join one or more NeLM Communities member directories. There are five to choose from:

- London Cancer New Drugs Group
- Prescribing in a Secure Environment
- Non-medical Prescribing
- Prescribing & Community Care
- Patient Group Directions (PGDs)

Joining allows other website users to contact you by email.

When you have registered, you can choose from a list of ‘newsletter subscriptions’ – alerts that you can receive free of charge by email – and areas of interest. Indicate in the appropriate click box those that you would like to receive. See the ‘email newsletter’ section later in this guide for details. You can change these at any time after you have registered.

To update or change your registration details after registering (e.g. to change your password):

1. From the home page, www.nelm.nhs.uk, log in using your username (email address) and password.
2. Click on ‘my account’ in the top right hand corner of the screen.

This will bring up the details you gave when you registered. To change these, type over the existing information. To change your password, click on ‘change password’ and follow the instructions on the screen.

Newsletter subscriptions

You can register to receive alerts from NeLM by email. These newsletters are free of charge. When you register you will be prompted to choose from a list of newsletter subscriptions.
To change your ‘subscriptions’ after you have registered:

1. From the home page, www.nelm.nhs.uk, log in using your username (email address) and password.

2. Click on ‘update newsletter subscription’ at the top of the screen.

3. This will bring up a box containing details of your current role and the information you have chosen to receive by email: additional subscriptions, areas of medical interest, community areas and communities.

4. If you wish to change any of these details, click on ‘amend details’ at the top right hand corner of the box.

5. This will bring up a full list of ‘additional subscriptions’ you can receive and options for other content to be emailed to you. News items are automatically included in your email newsletter; there is no need to have any additional alerts if you don’t want.

6. Tick the boxes to indicate which, if any, additional subscriptions you require.

7. Click on ‘Save subscription preferences’ at the bottom of the screen.

NB: To unsubscribe, click on ‘unsubscribe’ in the right hand corner of the box.

If you have any problems amending your subscription preferences, email nelm_support@gstt.nhs.uk.

Providing feedback to NeLM

To help improve and develop the NeLM website, your comments on it are welcome. To provide feedback on the site, click on ‘Site Feedback’ at the top of the screen. This will bring up a text box for you to type your comments and submit them electronically.

Comments on this user guide are appreciated. Please contact Karoline Brennan via nwmedinfo@nhs.net.

This document was prepared by Karoline Brennan, Medicines Information Pharmacist, North West Medicines Information Centre, 70 Pembroke Place, Liverpool L69 3GF.