During this tutorial module, you will learn how to combine terms, use subheadings, and add limits. The tutorial will also provide an overview of the explode, focus, and scope note features of Ovid MEDLINE. This tutorial is approximately 10 minutes long.

On the library’s homepage, there is a link to Ovid in the “Popular Resources” section on the lower left. Click the **Ovid MEDLINE link** below.

The Ovid menu appears. As you can see, Ovid offers several options for searching MEDLINE.

Let’s use the very first MEDLINE database listed, which is the most comprehensive. Select the **Ovid MEDLINE(R) ALL link**.

The Ovid search interface helps you set up your search by walking you through the Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) and subheadings. Note that the check box next to Map Term to Subject Heading is selected by default. When you run a search, the system will automatically try to map you to the terminology used in the National Library of Medicine’s thesaurus called MeSH (Medical Subject Headings).

Using MeSH, a controlled vocabulary, is the preferred way to conduct a search, because the terms will consistently retrieve the same information, and it eliminates concerns over the inclusion of synonyms or variant spellings.

We are going to search for articles that discuss Marfan Syndrome and surgery. When searching Ovid MEDLINE, you will want to run a separate search for each concept in your search strategy then combine them.

Type **Marfan Syndrome** in the search box below and click **Search**. It mapped us to the MeSH heading, Marfan Syndrome. Notice it is a link. Off to the right there are three options: explode, focus, and scope. Let’s go over these tools.

Select the **Marfan Syndrome link**. Clicking on Marfan Syndrome will show you where it appears in the MeSH tree. When we talk about a MeSH tree, think of broad, general terms being the trunk of the tree, then the terms become more specific as you move out to the branches of the tree.

In this example, Marfan syndrome appears under Bone Disease, Developmental. You can look at this tree view to come up with other search terms. Are we interested in finding general articles on developmental bone diseases or articles discussing a specific type of developmental bone disease?

Or you can use this view to decide if you want to explode a term. The total number of Marfan Syndrome articles appears in the first column next to the subject heading.

The next column is the Explode option. You would select the Explode box if you wish to retrieve results using the selected term and all of its more specific terms indented below it. Therefore, the Explode option will let you search for multiple terms with a click of a button. Marfan Syndrome does not have any terms indented below it, so you cannot explode this term.

Look at Dwarfism located a few rows above Marfan Syndrome. It can be exploded because there is a plus sign beside it, indicating more specific terms. Click the **plus [+] sign beside Dwarfism**.

If you were searching for articles on Dwarfism, exploding that subject heading would broaden your search and thereby increase your retrieval by searching for articles on Dwarfism, as well as articles on Achondroplasia, Cockayne Syndrome, etc.

The Focus button is the next column. Selecting the Focus box would limit your search to those articles in which your subject heading is considered the major point (main idea) of the article. This option will narrow your search and decrease the number of articles you will retrieve.

Remember:

Explode = expands your search, more results

Focus = narrows your search, fewer results

The scope note “i” button is a good place to go for more information about a term.

**Select the scope note for Marfan Syndrome**. The scope note gives you a definition for the term, and it may suggest other terms to use. We have looked at the Explode, Focus, and the Scope Note tools.

Let’s continue our search for articles discussing surgery and Marfan Syndrome. Marfan Syndrome is automatically selected for us. We are not going to use the focus button the first time through. You can always go back and narrow your search if needed. Click the **Continue button** to move to the next page.

Now we are given the option of adding subheadings, which are another way of narrowing your search. You can select as few or as many as you want. The number in parentheses indicates the number of articles using this subheading. Using

subheadings can be a great way to retrieve articles focused on a particular aspect of a topic.

Select the **checkbox for the subheading Surgery**. Next, select the **Continue button.**

You can see we have 458 articles in our search results. We can narrow our results even further by adding limits.

Select the **Humans box**. Now select the **English Language** box. By leaving the search box blank, all limits you select will be automatically applied to the last search you did. Select the **Search button**. This took our search results down to 377 articles.

Let’s take a look at one of the citations. Let’s look at the **Pediatric Cardiology citation (#17)**. If an article has an abstract, there will be an “Abstract” button below the citation.

Select the **Abstract link**. The Abstract view appears.

Now let’s look at the Complete Reference view for this article. Select **Complete Reference**, which is located on the right side of the page. This view includes the MeSH terms used to index the article. If this particular article is exactly what you are looking for, this can be a good place to go to find other possible search terms to use to find similar articles. You can also see the subheadings that were used.

Now let’s search for articles about angiotensin receptor blockers and Marfan Syndrome to show another example of searching Ovid. Type **angiotensin receptor blockers** in the search box below and click **Search**. Angiotensin receptor antagonists was the suggested MeSH heading to use for angiotensin receptor blockers.

Before moving on, let’s review the Explode, Focus, and Scope features. Let’s see whether we should explode our search term. Click the **Angiotensin Receptor Antagonists link** to view the MeSH tree.

You can see that Angiotensin II Type 1 Receptor Blockers and Angiotensin II Type 2 Receptor Blockers are indented below Angiotensin Receptor Antagonists. **Click the** **+ button in front of Angiotensin II Type 1 Receptor Blockers**. You can see that there are some drug terms, such as Losartan, indented below Angiotensin II Type 1 Receptor Blockers.

We could run separate searches for all of the selected terms. But it would be faster to just combine those into one search. If we explode Angiotensin Receptor Antagonists, we will be searching for articles that discuss Angiotensin II Type 1 Receptor Blockers

and the individual drug names, Angiotensin II Type 2 Receptor Blockers, or Angiotensin Receptor Antagonists.

**Select Explode (the checkbox in the first column) for Angiotensin Receptor Antagonists.** Now we need to scroll to the top of the page. Select the **Continue button**.

Select the **Continue button** on the subheadings page. It will include all subheadings by default. We retrieved 16912 articles. Now we need to combine this search with Marfan Syndrome. We have to run a new search for Marfan Syndrome since our previous search was limited to surgery-related articles.

Type **Marfan Syndrome** in the search box below and click **Search**. Since we know from the first search that we can’t explode Marfan Syndrome, just click the **Continue button**. Select the **Continue button** to include all subheadings.

Let’s combine our two previous searches so we can find articles about Angiotensin Receptor Antagonists and Marfan Syndrome. **Select the checkbox next to the search for Angiotensin Receptor Antagonists (exp Angiotensin Receptor Antagonists).**

Next, **select the checkbox next to the search for Marfan Syndrome.** Click the **AND** button below to combine the searches. We now have 91 articles in our results.

Let’s limit our results to studies involving humans and English. Select the **English Language** box. Select the **Humans box** below. Now select the **Search button** to apply the limits to our search.

We narrowed our search to 73 articles. Here are some of the citations we retrieved.

One last tip: if you are looking for the most recent articles, you may also want to run your search as a keyword. There can be a lag of days or months before new articles are assigned MeSH terms. Prominent publications are indexed within days while other publications may take weeks or months to be indexed. To search marfan syndrome as a keyword you would select marfan syndrome.mp search as Keyword on the term mapping screen.

During this module, we looked at the following search tools:

* Exploding MeSH terms
* Adding subheadings
* Combining searches
* Adding limits
* Viewing the Complete Reference to see the MeSH headings assigned to an article

You can use these tools in Ovid MEDLINE to make your search results more relevant and easier to manage.

We hope this tutorial was helpful to you.

[Tutorial evaluation link](https://uscmed.sc.libguides.com/tutorialevaluation)

If you have any questions or comments, please contact:

Roz McConnaughy

[Roz.McConnaughy@uscmed.sc.edu](mailto:roz.mcconnaughy@uscmed.sc.edu)

(803) 216-3214