Medical Library Research Support Services

Literature Search Services Policy – Medical Library of the University of Bern
The research support services team of the University of Bern Medical Library supports students, researchers and clinicians through consultations and reference services, as well as teaching and learning opportunities through lectures, workshops and seminars on literature search techniques and academic writing. The medical information specialists have profound expertise in conducting systematic literature searching, teaching, and keeping up-to-date through continuous professional education.

The services of the medical information specialist at the Medical Library includes:
- Individual research consultations
- Courses and workshops
- Comprehensive literature searches
- Librarian assisted literature searches

This policy includes services offered to both internal and external clients such as students, researchers, staff members, etc. Service requests from members of the medical and dentistry faculty are prioritised.

1. Advisory services and individual research consultation
The Medical Library of University of Bern offers an advisory service and individual research consultation service for literature search inquiries.

The medical information specialist role is listed below.
- Advice on adaption of strategy for different databases
- Consultation and support for developing search strategies
- Feedback on framing the research question
- Feedback on initial search strategy / Peer Review of search strategies
- Advice on relevant sources to search (medical and pharmaceutical databases, trial registries, grey literature)
- Referral to relevant handbooks and guidance documents for conducting different types of literature reviews
- Setting up search alerts for new publication

A research consultation is an opportunity to meet individually with a medical information specialist to discuss the design of research question, search tool formats, search strategies, how to use biomedical databases effectively, and to request for peer review of search strategies. The service facilitates a deeper understanding of literature searching and prepares students and researchers for professional clinical practice and research.

During the research consultation, the medical information specialist will advise the client on creating and carrying out their own literature search. The medical information specialist does not conduct the searching for the client.

1.1 Contact
For any advisory service in literature searching, the research support service team can be contacted by email: support_med@ub.unibe.ch.
Individual research consultations with a medical information specialist are available by appointment and requests are made via our online form. To fill out the request form you will need to provide:
- Short description of the aim of the research and the research question
- Time frame for working on the literature search
- Study design and main concepts of your topic

Once the form has been submitted, a medical information specialist will review the form and email the client within 2 working days to schedule a consultation.

1.2 Language
The sessions may be provided in English and German.

1.3 Time frame
An initial consultation by phone or email should not last more than 30 minutes. Students are encouraged to attend courses offered by the library. The advisory services should be in support of teaching at University of Bern. Faculty members, researchers, and external clients are encouraged to book an individual research consultation or work collaboratively with the medical information specialist for a comprehensive literature search. An individual research consultation can last from 1-2 hours. Additional appointments may be scheduled depending on the complexity of the search and time required to resolve questions.

1.4 Fees
The offered services for an individual research consultation are equal for internal and external clients, but associated fees differ.
- Affiliates of University of Bern (Students, Professors, Post-docs, scientific collaborators,…): Free of charge
- Clients of Insel hospital and employees of the public administration of Canton Bern: CHF 88 per full hour
- External Clients (Non-affiliates of University of Bern): CHF 114 per hour, partial hours will be charged pro rata

2. Librarian assisted search services
The Medical Library of University of Bern offers librarian assisted literature searching services. Librarian assisted searches are for the purposes of but not limited to: topic exploration, research, quality improvement projects, teaching/training, presentations, personal knowledge, etc.
For students, the medical information specialist will not conduct a complete literature search needed to write their master thesis or dissertation. Students are encouraged to attend courses, workshops and/or individual research consultations offered by the library.

Librarian assisted searches dedicate a maximum of 2 hours per research project. Requests are done on a first come, first serve basis. These searches are designed accordingly by the medical information specialist to deliver a set of relevant references in a format agreed upon (generally in a compressed EndNote library and XML or RIS format). No full-text articles will be delivered.

Literature search requests for the production of systematic or scoping reviews, please refer to our Comprehensive Literature Searching Services. These types of knowledge synthesis are conducted based on set guidelines and standards. The literature search is exhaustive and demands a substantial amount of time.
2.1 Contact
The assisted search service by a medical information specialist are requested via our online form. To fill out the online form you will need to provide:
- Brief summary of your research question and topic
- Inclusion and exclusion criteria
- Available references (core articles) closely related to your topic and describe your field well

2.2 Time frame
Librarian assisted literature search requests exceeding more than 2 hours will be treated as a comprehensive literature search service (see 4.0).

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Librarian assisted literature searching services exceeding more than 2 hours will be treated as a comprehensive literature searching service (see 4.0).
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- External Clients (Non-affiliates of University of Bern): CHF 114 per hour, partial hours will be charged pro rata

3. Courses and workshops
The Medical Library of the University of Bern has a strong dedication to teach students and researchers to enhance their research skills and increase the quality of their publications. Courses can be offered in introductory and advanced literature searching to sound practice of evidence-based medicine. The courses prepare attendees for a career in research or clinical practice.
The offered courses in literature searching and evidence-based medicine includes:
- Curricular courses for the faculties of medicine and veterinary
- Customised courses to meet the needs of your institution, department or group

The medical information specialist will consult with you on course assignments, content and learning objectives of the library session. The number of ECTS per course has to be agreed together with the person responsible for the curriculum.

3.1 Contact
For any course offers in literature searching the research support services team can be contacted by email: support_med@ub.unibe.ch

3.2 Time
Courses consist at least of a 1 hour lecture and a 1 hour hands-on session. The class size for the hands-on session should not exceed 18 participants. The medical information specialist will consult with you on course length and time points.

3.3 Language
The sessions may be provided in English and German.

3.4 Fees
- Affiliates of University of Bern (Students, Professors, Post-docs, scientific collaborators,…): Free of charge
- Courses for departments or groups at Inselspital or public administration of Canton Bern: per complete hour and group CHF 255
- Customised courses for external institutions, departments or groups: per complete hour and group CHF 330

4. Comprehensive literature searching

The Medical Library supports researchers, clinicians and external clients in the design and conduct of thorough and complex literature searches for systematic or scoping reviews, HTAs, clinical guidelines. The medical information specialist works collaboratively with clients based on guidelines and standards set forth by Cochrane Collaboration, PRISMA, JBI, Campbell Collaboration, and the National Academy of Medicine (formerly known as IOM). Services include:

- Consultation and guidance in various steps in conducting a systematic review
- Search concepts and strategy construction for initial search strategy
- Database selection; grey literature / unpublished literature choices
- First search strategy draft submitted to author
- Search strategy revision / final approval
- Running the searches in all agreed sources
- Search completion
- Peer-review of search strategies
- Results delivered in agreed format
- Search documentation of search strategies, databases, limits, numbers of results (to be included in the appendix of a manuscript and in a PRISMA flowchart)
- Writing the search methodology for the manuscript

Further services in comprehensive literature searching may be negotiated.

4.1 Request for comprehensive literature searching

The comprehensive literature search request form has to be submitted online or to support_med@ub.unibe.ch. We attend to the reviews by the order in which we receive them. Before submitting the request form you will need:

- To have already conducted a preliminary search and have a final version of the protocol. Please see systematic review protocol example (we recommend to register your protocol in PROSPERO)
- Brief summary of your research question
- Inclusion and exclusion criteria
- A minimum of five references (core articles) closely related to your topic and describe your field well
- An approximate timeline for completion of your systematic review project

4.2 Timelines

Comprehensive searches are an iterative and time-intensive process, therefore, please contact us as soon as you have a draft protocol. How much time it actually takes depends on the complexity of the search, types and number of databases searched, changes required, and length of time required to resolve questions. The medical information specialist will discuss timelines and delivery dates before any work commences.

4.3 Fees and agreement with cost estimation

After submission of the form, the Medical Library may contact the research team for any information that needs to be clarified. After the initial consultation with the PI an agreement form will be sent to the PI.
The fees vary depending on the requested services. In general, the following fees apply:
- Affiliates of University of Bern (Students, Professors, Post-docs, scientific collaborators, etc.): CHF 88 per full hour
- Clients of Insel hospital and employees of the public administration of Canton Bern: CHF 88 per full hour
- External Clients (Non-affiliates of University of Bern): CHF 114 per hour, partial hours will be charged pro rata

4.4 Provision of the services by the medical information specialist
The services include all the steps outlined in the agreement. Conducting a systematic review is a team effort, and it is advisable to include the medical information specialist in team meetings to best understand the rationale and development of the review. Before the medical information specialist can create an initial search strategy, a systematic review protocol must be provided or close to completion during the development of the initial search strategy. The medical information specialist can advise the review team on protocol standards and registration. The Medical Library highly recommends investigators to register their protocol in order to minimise duplication of systematic review projects. The PI must approve the final draft of the search strategy (generally in Ovid Medline) before the medical information specialist can complete searches in all of the agreed databases. The medical information specialist provides the documentation of the search to be included in the appendix of the manuscript and PRISMA flowchart.

Any changes affecting systematic review procedures have to be communicated immediately to the medical information specialist. These changes should be reflected in a form of an amendment to the agreement.

The medical information specialist will deliver the search results in a format agreed by the team (generally in a compressed EndNote library and XML or RIS format). The research team is responsible for saving the completed search results sent by the medical information specialist. No full-text articles will be delivered. Many articles are available via full text through UB e-journals (accessible for all clients with an University of Bern Campus account). Other articles may not be available in the electronic databases of the UB. In this case, the UB Document Delivery service will support you to obtain the articles.

In agreeing to services, the PI/lead author is required to send the finalised manuscript and search strategy documentation to the medical information specialist for review and feedback before any journal submissions. This extends to other types of submissions such as protocols, conference proceedings, etc.

Any kind of contribution made by the medical information specialist should be reviewed by them.

Upon request, a second medical information specialist of the library can conduct a peer review of the search strategy. A peer review of the search strategy is done according to the PRESS Checklist, a guideline for information specialists to evaluate search strategies.

4.5 Authorship
Including information specialists as co-authors is "correlated with significantly higher quality reported search strategies". According to the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors, authorship are based on the following 4 criteria:
- Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work
- Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content
- Final approval of the version to be published
- Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved

The search strategies medical information specialists design and implement are a substantial contribution to the study and acquisition of data. Additionally, writing the search methodology falls under drafting the work. We can provide any requested feedback and revisions as well as final approval. Authors who do not engage the medical information specialist as a co-author should acknowledge their work as a contributor. We would like to point out that some journal publishers may request contributor disclosure statements. It is imperative for the team to clarify all roles and contributions in the early stages of the project.

4.5 Grants
Researchers receiving grant funding for their projects are expected to include library efforts in the grant as an unpaid expert consultant.

5. Questions?
If you have any questions concerning this policy, please contact the head of the Medical Library, Dr. Michelle Schaffer at Michelle.Schaffer@ub.unibe.ch or +41 31 49 47.

**Bern, August 17th 2020**

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