

INTERACTIVE WORKSHOP 4

Comparing Search Strategies : The Effects of Our Choices

Wichor Bramer*

Abstract

The goal of the workshop is to compare search strategies created by participants for a certain research topic. The teachers will share as preparation several research topics for which they ask participants to make decisions on about the use of certain databases, the use of various elements (key concepts in the search) and the use of search terms. They are also asked to create a search strategy to retrieve the most relevant references. The search strategies are compared (anonymously) during the workshop. They are scored for effectiveness (retrieving the known relevant references) and efficiency (not retrieving too many irrelevant references). The terms that are used in the search for the various concepts are compared and the concepts that are combined together are compared. Together we decide on the most optimum search strategies and learn the effect of choices that we make in the process

Types of activities: Participants prepare a search strategy as homework before the workshop, and send it to the teachers. The teachers summarize these search strategies and present the outcomes during the workshop. In the workshop participants will vote in an online system on certain aspects of the search strategy: whether to include a certain element or general term in the search. The effect of that choice is then shown in terms of sensitivity loss or specificity gain.

Learning outcomes: Participants get to compare their search strategy with that of peers and see how they perform compared to others. Participants learn from each other about the terms that are used, and where to find them, and decisions that are made during the search process.

Keywords: Systematic searching, systematic reviews, search strategies

* Erasmus MC Medical Library, Netherlands, w.bramer@erasmusmc.nl