

Effectiveness and Efficiency in Systematic Searching

Wichor Bramer*

Abstract

Experienced information specialists designing searches for systematic reviews will be taught a new method using which exhaustive search strategies can be created much faster maintaining high sensitivity and acceptable precision. Participants will learn a coding structure that helps them create complicated search strategies more easily, optimization methods that help identify extra words on any topic, and methods to semi-automatically translate search strategies between databases and interfaces using macros in MS Word. After demonstrations and exercises with a shared example research question, participants will work in their own database of choice on their own (or their customer's) research question(s). An experienced information specialist will guide them individually through the process. After the workshop the participants will be able to create complex searches that are checked for completeness and have been translated in different databases much faster than with traditional methods.

Types of activities: Pre Course homework will consist of analysis of research question, and finding search terms. During the course participants will practice the new method hands-on in their own database of choice. Participants will be guided through the installation of macros for search translation on their own computers, and explained how to use and adapt them. Some searches will be shown, and the participants are asked to improve the sensitivity or specificity of the search. How can we be sure that no relevant references are missed while not too many irrelevant references are retrieved.

Learning outcomes

- Participants can analyze a research question and extract search terms from them.
- Participants will be able to use the new search method to create complex search strategies for systematic reviews
- Participants will be able to optimize their search strategies with the methods described to identify missed relevant search terms

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- Participants can translate search strategies with the developed macros

Keywords: Systematic searching, systematic reviews, search strategies

About the trainer

Wichor Bramer is an information specialist at Erasmus MC Medical Library in Rotterdam. Wichor has developed a method for searches that allows them to do efficient and effective searches in a short period of time. Wichor defended his PhD thesis in October 2019 on the topic of “serving evidence syntheses” in which he presented his methods. Sabrina Gunput, Elise Krabbendam, Maarten Engel and Christa Niehot are colleagues of Wichor. They use the method on a daily basis to create searches for systematic reviews. Which of the colleagues will join Wichor in the presentation is yet to be determined.

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