

INAHTA Publications Repository

User guide

Searching the repository

The repository search protocol uses keywords. You can filter results using the drop-down menus for the year published, the type of publication, and agency. A bar will appear next to the results: green indicating a high relevance, red a low relevance to the search executed. A number of Boolean operators and special characters can be used to refine the search string – see below.

Operators & special characters for searching

Operator	Description	Example
OR	<p>Use OR (in capital letters) to find documents that contain at least one of the words or phrases searched.</p> <p>Results show all documents that contain both or just one of the words or phrases searched. <i>NOTE: This is the default setting for the search tool = "OR"</i></p>	<p>Example: if you searched for diabetes OR monitoring, results would be documents containing diabetes or monitoring or <u>both</u>. (NOTE: this is identical to the default search setting, i.e., diabetes OR monitoring is the same as a search for diabetes monitoring).</p>
AND NOT	<p>Use AND NOT (in capital letters) or the minus sign (-) to find documents that contain a word or phrase while excluding those documents that contain a different word or phrase.</p> <p>Results show all documents that contain the searched word or phrase while eliminating those documents that contain a different word or phrase.</p> <p>NOTE: the Boolean operator NOT is <u>not</u> the same as AND NOT operator.</p>	<p>Examples: searching breast AND NOT cancer will retrieve documents that contain breast but not those containing the word cancer. This search can also be written with the minus sign like this: breast - cancer</p> <p>Example: breast NOT cancer is the same as searching for breast only. This is different than breast AND NOT cancer, (see above).</p>
AND	<p>Use AND (in capital letters) to find documents that must contain two or more words or phrases.</p> <p>Results show all documents in the repository that contain all the words or phrases searched.</p>	<p>Examples: if you searched for diabetes AND monitoring, all documents containing <u>both</u> of these words will be shown. If you searched for "cancer diagnosis" AND "depression treatment" documents containing <u>both</u> these phrases will be shown, listed in decreasing frequency of occurrence.</p>

Search type	Description	Example
A single word	All documents that contain this word. Results are listed in descending frequency of occurrence.	Example: if back was the search word, all documents that contain back are listed, with the documents that contain the most frequent occurrence of back presented at the top of the list.
Group of words	A group of words with no operator between them. Results will show all documents that contain at least one of these words. <i>NOTE: This is the default setting for the search tool = "OR"</i>	Example: if back pain is searched, all documents where both or either of these words appear will be listed. Those that contain both back and pain together with the greatest frequency are at the top of the list. The documents in which just one of the words is present will be towards the bottom, listed in descending frequency of occurrence.
Phrase (" ")	A group of words enclosed in quotation marks (" ") All documents that contain the exact phrase contained in the quotation marks.	Example: if " back pain " was searched, all documents that contain this exact phrase are listed, with the documents where it appears most frequently at the top.
Root search (*)	Search for words with the same root using the asterisk symbol (*) Results will show all documents that contain the root word or any variation of it.	Example: if you used hypothyroid* then both hypothyroid and hypothyroidism will be listed in the results by decreasing frequency of occurrence.
Fuzzy search (~)	A search for a similar word using the tilde (~) Results will show all documents that contain words similar to the one searched.	Example: if you search for roam~ the results will show all documents that contain similar words, e.g., rooms , foam in decreasing frequency of occurrence. Note: You can add a parameter to specify the required level of similarity. The value is between 0 and 1. With a value closer to 1, only words with a higher similarity will match. E.g., roam~0.8
Proximity search (" ") and add the tilde (~) ALT+126 for the tilde	Search for 2 or more words that are close to each other in one document. Put the search words in quotation marks (" ") and add the tilde (~) at the end Results show all documents that contain the search words in proximity to one another at the specified distance.	Example: if you search for " measurement cancer "~25, all documents where measurement and cancer appear within 25 words of each other are shown, listed in decreasing frequency of occurrence.
Booster search (^)	Booster: use the caret symbol (^) to search for 2 or more words or phrases where you want one word to be more relevant than the other(s) in the search results Results show all documents that contain the at least one of the search words or phrases with the specified booster applied.	Example: if you search for breast cancer screening^4 , all documents that contain breast or cancer or screening are retrieved, but those that contain screening will be boosted (weighted higher) in the search results and moved towards the top of the list.

Search type	Description	Example
Required search (+)	Search for documents that must contain a specific word or phrase, use the plus sign (+) before the word or phrase. All documents that contain that word or phrase are listed in decreasing frequency of occurrence.	Example: search for (free exercise) +osteoarthritis will retrieve documents that contain osteoarthritis , and also those may also contain the words free or exercise .
Grouping search	Use parentheses to create more complex search protocols. () Operations within the parentheses are applied together then other elements in the protocol, similar to mathematics.	Example: +(cancer OR metastases) +lung retrieves documents with either cancer or metastases or both, and then, of these documents only those also containing lung are listed in the results.

Example protocols

The table below shows some search protocol examples and the number of records retrieved in the repository (as at January 2015). This shows how the operators, quotation marks, and brackets can help to focus the results for more targeted searching.

Search protocol example	Logic	# records retrieved
Breast cancer	<i>Breast</i> or <i>cancer</i> in document	260
Breast OR cancer	<i>Breast</i> or <i>cancer</i> in document	260
Breast cancer - screening	<i>Breast</i> or <i>cancer</i> in document but not <i>screening</i>	179
Breast AND cancer	<i>Breast</i> and <i>cancer</i> in document	84
"Breast cancer"	The phrase <i>breast cancer</i> in document	78
"Breast cancer" AND treatment	The phrase <i>breast cancer</i> and the word <i>treatment</i> in document	43
Breast cancer +node	<i>Node</i> in document, with those also containing <i>breast</i> or <i>cancer</i> appearing closer to the top of the list.	25
+(breast OR cancer) +node	<i>Breast</i> or <i>cancer</i> in the document, and of these, only documents also containing <i>node</i>	23
breast AND cancer AND node	<i>Breast</i> and <i>cancer</i> in the document, and of these, only documents also containing <i>node</i>	20
Breast AND NOT cancer	<i>Breast</i> in document, but eliminating those that also contain <i>cancer</i>	9
"breast cancer" AND "node biopsy" AND treatment	The phrase <i>breast cancer</i> and the phrase <i>node biopsy</i> and the word <i>treatment</i> in document	5

Troubleshooting

Issue	Solution
A grey screen appears when I enter a search protocol	The operator protocol may be invalid. Retry the search, noting that sometimes a mix of Boolean and arithmetic operators can cause an error. Switch all operators to Boolean (AND, OR, AND NOT), if possible.

If you have any questions, please contact the INAHTA Secretariat at INAHTA@ihe.ca or +1 (Canada) 780 401 1770.