



MeSH Changes and PubMed Searching: Class Handout

Check your learning by filling in the blanks.

Introduction

1. MeSH changes for the next year are generally posted in the month of _____ on the NLM MeSH web site.
2. Documentation and guidance on MeSH changes in MEDLINE can be found in the NLM _____ in November and December.

Review Basics

3. Check your saved PubMed searches for MeSH term _____ and automatic _____.
4. How many additional MeSH terms are added when my search maps to Diagnostic Errors? _____

Two Dates in MeSH

5. When two dates are listed for “Year Introduced,” you can use the term to search the concept back to the oldest/newest (choose one) _____ date listed.
6. Quiz question: How far back can you search with the MeSH term Ethnicity?
 - a. 1968
 - b. 1983
 - c. 1991
 - d. 2022

Types of Changes to MeSH

7. New term; Same meaning: When MeSH renames a concept (e.g., Insectivores):
 - a. The existing indexed records are changed so that the old term is replaced with the new one.
 - b. The old term is added as an Entry Term.
 - c. To adjust your searches:
 - i. Usually, you need to do _____.
8. New Term clarifies meaning: When MeSH adds a term (e.g., Depressive Disorder) to clarify the meaning of an existing term.
 - a. Existing indexed records are usually not changed.
 - b. The “old” term may have a scope change.
 - c. To adjust your searches:
 - i. Decide which terms are best for your concepts.
 - ii. Check _____ for searching older literature.
9. New Term is more specific: When MeSH adds a term to gain specificity (e.g., Systemic Racism).
 - a. Existing indexed records are generally NOT changed.
 - b. The “old” term continues to be used.
 - c. To adjust your searches:
 - i. Consider using the new, more specific term to retrieve newly indexed records.

- ii. Use Previous Indexing information and/or the broader term with the [_____] search tag to search previously-indexed records.

10. Exercise 1

- a. How far back can I search with Spike Glycoprotein, Coronavirus (the current MeSH term)? _____
 - b. Where do I look in the MeSH record for terms used prior? _____

 - c. What field tag do I use to limit to records indexed between 1991 and 2013? [_____]
11. Hierarchy Changes: MeSH hierarchy changes (e.g., Ethnicity, Racial Groups) can:
- a. Result in _____ retrieval changes.
 - b. Generally offer an improvement to your _____.
 - c. To adjust your searches:
 - i. Take a fresh look at the new hierarchy and reconsider your search.
12. Other Changes: Other changes, including subheading changes, will be explained in the NLM Technical Bulletin's [MEDLINE Data Changes](#) article.
- 13. Exercise 2:** According to the 2022 MEDLINE Data Changes article,
- a. Housekeeping was replaced by: _____
 - b. Iron/deficiency is now: _____
- 14. Exercise 3:** You want to search PubMed as comprehensively as possible, back to 2010, for literature related to vaccination hesitancy. How would you do this?
- a. What is the current MeSH term for this concept? _____
 - b. What were the previous MeSH terms for this concept?
 - i. _____ (2017-2021)
 - ii. _____ (1996-2016)
 - c. How would you restrict your search for a range of indexing dates? Copy your full strategy, here:

- 15. Exercise 4: [IF TIME]:** You want to search PubMed as comprehensively as possible, back to 2016, for literature related to anticoagulation reversal. How would you do this?

- a. What is the current MeSH terms for this concept?
- b. What were the previous MeSH terms for this concept?
 - i. _____ (1998-2021)
 - ii. _____ (2008-2021)
 - iii. How would you restrict your search for a range of indexing dates? Copy your full strategy here:

Summary of Tips

To adjust to changes in MeSH:

- a. Check MeSH mappings in your PubMed Search Details
- b. Check automatic explosions in MeSH
- c. Use the “Year Introduced,” Previous Indexing guidance and broader terms with [mhda] to craft searches for older records.
- d. Read about the MeSH changes in October and the year-end changes to MEDLINE in December in the NLM Technical Bulletin.

Pre/Post Test:

1. When a new, more specific MeSH heading is added to the vocabulary, it is applied to records that were indexed in previous years.
 - a. True
 - b. False

Your answer: _____

2. When a preferred term is replaced, the term that was replaced is retained in MeSH as a(n):
 - a. Preferred Term
 - b. Entry Term
 - c. Supplementary Concept

Your answer: _____

3. The PubMed search results for a new, more specific term (e.g., Systemic Racism) will be included in the results for the broader term above it (e.g., Racism).
 - a. True
 - b. False

Your answer: _____

4. If my saved search suddenly retrieves many more or many fewer citations on a regular basis starting at the end of a calendar year, what is the most likely explanation? (Select the best answer)
 - a. A changed MeSH term with the same meaning
 - b. A new MeSH concept
 - c. Hierarchy changes to MeSH

Your answer: _____