Medical Databases in the University of Malaya Library : POPLINE, HEALTHPLAN, CCIS, IMMUNOLOGY & AIDS

Janaki Sinnasamy*

It is generally known that doctors use the MEDLINE database most for their literature search. However, they must know that there are other medical databases available such as the PSYCLIT, CANCERLIT, AIRDSLINE, etc. Some of these have yet to gain popularity and recognition among the medical personnel.

Similarly the allied health personnel, such as the nurses, also tend to use only the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL). Databases such as HEALTHPLAN, POPLINE are useful reference tools for them as the subject emphasis is more on the non-clinical aspects.

Medical Databases

Apart from **MEDLINE** and **CINAHL,** the Medical Library of the University of Malaya has in its collection the following databases:

1. POPLINE
2. HEALTHPLAN
3. CCIS
4. IMMUNOLOGY & AIDS

A brief description of each one of these databases in given below to present a clearer picture of their usefulness and the method of accessing them. A simple comparative search between the databases is provided to show that there is merit in using more than one database. Overlaping of citations between the various databases is unavoidable to a certain extent, but there are unique articles in each database which are not cited by the other.

1. POPLINE
1827 - June 1995

POPLINE is an invaluable source of information on population, family planning, and health issues. It is the only comprehensive international database covering these areas. The material is gathered from around the world, regardless of language. The majority of the items date from 1970, but some sources date as early as 1827.

POPLINE covers all types of publications including journal articles, monographs and technical reports. About 30% of these documents are difficult to

obtain being unpublished reports. POPLINE is maintained by the Popline Communication Services, a component of the John Hopkins School of Public Health in the United States.

The database uses the NISC retrieval software. To begin the search, the CD-ROM is placed in the first drive and at the C prompt:
C> type **nisc**
and the search can begin.

An interesting feature of POPLINE is its inbuilt ability to do plural searching. For example, a search for teenager would automatically include teenagers as well. This database enables searching using a phrase whereas MEDLINE limits use of such words as "in". "In" in MEDLINE should be followed by a field name.

An article published in the June 1994 issue of *Database magazine* found that POPLINE has a much broader coverage on adolescent reproductive health issues than the MEDLINE. A comparison of the size of POPLINE and MEDLINE shows that MEDLINE has 7.2 million records with 31,000 records added each month, while POPLINE has 210,000 records with 900 new records added each month.

A comparative study:

	MEDLINE	POPLINE until	CINAHL
	1988-1995	Dec 1994	1983-1993
Aids and prevention and adolescence	239 records	352 records	16 records
Teenage pregnancy	239 records	942 records	42 records

2. HEALTHPLAN
1985 - June 1995

The HEALTHPLAN database comes from the National Library of Medicine's bibliographic database and the Health Planning and Administration File which contain citations to the literature dealing with the non-clinical aspects of health care delivery. The advantage of this database over MEDLINE is that HEALTHPLAN is contained in a single file, thus avoiding the chore of having to change the discs to search different years.

*Librarian, Medical Library, University of Malaya

Like MEDLINE and CINAHL, it also uses the SilverPlatter search and retrieval software; hence searching is similar to MEDLINE/CINAHL. At C> type 'spirs'.

A comparative study:

	HEALTHPLAN 1985-1995	MEDLINE 1986-1995	CINAHL 1983-1993
Stroke and pateint and rehabilitation	237 records	426 records	77 records

3. CCIS (Computerised Clinical Information System) 1995

The CCIS database includes the following modules

1. Toxicology Info (POISONDEX, TOMES, IDENTIDEX); which provides information on the chemical and physical properties of substances, exposures, standards and regulations and the chemical names of substances.

2. Drug Info (DRUGDEX, MARTINDALE, IDENTIDEX); which states the adverse effects of drugs, the interections between them, overdose treatment, and also information on dosing.

3. Disease and Trauma Information for Acute Care (EMERG INDEX) contains acute care literature from journals and monographs.

CCIS uses the MICROMEDEX software.
To begin the search:
    At C> type **cd mdx**
    MDX> type **mdx**

A survey was carried out to assess the utilisation of CCIS database at the University Hospital, British Columbia. During a period of 6 months, an average of 57 searches/month was done with great ease, providing accurate data and the value of retrieved information was rated as high. A few recommendations were made such as ; dial-up access by modem thus enabling a larger volume of users.

The location of the computer system is important. In the case of the University of Malaya, placing a computer system at the Accident & Emergency Unit of the University Hospital would seem ideal or an in-house CD-ROM local area network between the Faculty of Medicine and the Hospital would prove to be very useful.

Where only brief information can be obtained from the abstracts through MEDLINE, CCIS would provide immediate information on how to treat a patient and what medication to prescribe. This is very useful especially during emergencies.

4. Immunology and AIDS 1985-1995

This database includes all the abstracts and citations relating to immunology and AIDS which have been selected and indexed by Excerpta Medica from 1980 to the present. 3,500 biomedical journals from 110 countries and leading immunology and AIDS journals are searched for relevant information. Beginning from 1990, these journals will be indexed from cover to cover so that all letters, reviews, editorial notes and commentaries are included in addition to the articles.

Information on AIDS and AIDS related aspects is well covered especially in the latter half of the 1980's as more research and clinical studies regarding this syndrome were published.

The database covers all aspects of clinical and experimental immunology as well as immunity, auto-immunity, hypersensitivity, histocompatibility and all aspects of the immune system. There is extensive coverage of cancer immunology, immunotherapy, immuno-pharmacology and immunological aspects of transplantation, para-proteinemias and the lymphoreticular system.

The difference between EMBASE (Excerpta Medica dataBASE) and MEDLINE is EMBASE covers more foreign journals and adopts the English spelling whereas MEDLINE covers a large number of American journals. References to allied health and nursing journals are not specifically included in EMBASE.

Like the MEDLINE and CINAHL, the SilverPlatter search and retrieval software is used.

To begin,
At C> type **spirs**

A comparative study :

	MEDLINE 1992-1995	Immunology and AIDS 1992-1995
Cancer immunology	8	106
Neoplasm immunology	435	0

[Cancer is a commonly used term whereas Neoplasm is the clinical term for cancer].

Conclusion

In the University of Malaya Medical Library, the MEDLINE and CINAHL databases still seem to be the major sources of reference for the users. Attempts have been made to introduce the other databases during user education programmes.

The POPLINE database is gaining popularity slowly especially among those specialising in public health and social obstetrics and gynecology. A comparative study of peoples, their attitudes and the trends among countries is made easy with this database. Similarly, users from the allied health field are beginning to realise there is more than one database to refer to, which is the

HEALTHPLAN. The CCIS (Computerised Clinical Information System) does not seem to attract the doctors. This database would be more appropriate for pharmacists and laboratory personnel. With the establishment of the Pharmacy School in the Medical Faculty, University of Malaya, it might gain attention later. On the other hand, this database would be a useful reference tool for the junior doctors at the Accident & Emergency Unit of the University Hospital.

REFERENCES

1. Excerpta Medica : compact disc : information made simple [pamphlet].
2. Pamphlets from MICROMEDEX, Inc.
3. *Popline on Disc,* 3(1), April 1995.
4. Pugh, G.E., and J.K.H. Tan. Computerised databases for emergency care : what impact on patient care?. *Meth. Inform. Med.* 33(5), 1994, 507-513.
5. Roper, Fred W., and Jo Anne Boorkman. *Introduction to reference sources in the health sciences.* 3rd ed. Metuchen, N.J. : Medical Library Association, 1994.