

Subject Headings

What are Subject Headings & how do they differ from keyword searching?

Subject Headings, also be referred to as “index terms,” are controlled vocabulary terms used in database records to make searching easier and more successful. By standardizing the words or phrases used to represent concepts, you don't need to try and figure out all the ways different authors could refer to the same concept.

Keywords

- Natural language that describes your topic
- What you think of as you think of words to search
- Searched throughout the document, or the search can be focused on title, author, etc.
- Everyone uses different keywords or spellings.

Subject Headings (SH)

- Also called "controlled vocabulary"
- Words and phrases that are used to "tag" articles in a consistent way
- One SH can be used to cover multiple keywords in the form of narrower terms
- Only searches the SH field, not in the full text or title or anywhere else
- Can be slow to change/update
- Not flexible

Why use Subject Headings?

With the wide variety of vocabulary used to represent concepts in research literature, finding articles about specific concepts can be difficult without the controlled vocabulary of a thesaurus. Controlled vocabulary provides a way of searching for information to ensure that you are seeing all of the relevant literature on your topic, despite the different vocabulary used to describe the same concept.

Using subject headings can give you more control in your search while ensuring you don't miss anything relevant.

Emtree – Subject Headings for Embase

1. To search Emtree, click on the Emtree link at the top of the Embase database. (Embase is accessed through the Libraries.)

The screenshot shows the top of the Embase website. The Embase logo is on the left. On the right, there are links for 'Search' and 'Emtree'. A green callout bubble with the number '1' points to the 'Emtree' link. Below the header is a blue bar with 'Quick Search' text. Underneath is a navigation menu with links: 'Quick', 'PICO', 'PV Wizard', 'Medical device', 'Advanced', 'Drug', 'Disease', 'Device', 'Article', and 'Autho'.

2. You can search or browse for your Emtree term(s). In this tutorial we will search, which is usually the primary way of finding terms. Similarly to searching for keywords in Embase, as you type the database will give you suggestions and show you the number of results associated with that suggestion.

To search, simply type in the term of interest (in this example we will search for Cancer), then either select the appropriate suggestion or select 'Find Term' and then select the appropriate

The screenshot shows the 'Query Builder' interface. It has a tab for 'Find Term' and a 'Browse by Facet' tab. A search input field contains the word 'Cancer'. Below the input field is a list of search suggestions, each with a radio button and a result count. A green callout bubble with the number '2' points to the first suggestion, 'cancer use: malignant neoplasm'. To the right of the suggestions is a blue 'Find Term >' button. At the bottom right, there is a 'Subscribe >' button.

| Suggestion | Results |
|---|-----------|
| cancer use: malignant neoplasm | 3,916,662 |
| cancers use: malignant neoplasm | 3,916,662 |
| cancer chemotherapeutic agent use: antineoplastic agent | 2,458,662 |
| cancer inhibitor use: antineoplastic agent | 2,458,662 |
| cancer therapy | 873,467 |
| cancer cure use: cancer therapy | 873,467 |
| cancer healing use: cancer therapy | 873,467 |

Once you select the Subject Heading (SH) of interest, you will be taken to a page showing you the 'tree' and additional information about the term.

The tree which shows you how the SH is categorized with broader and narrower concepts.

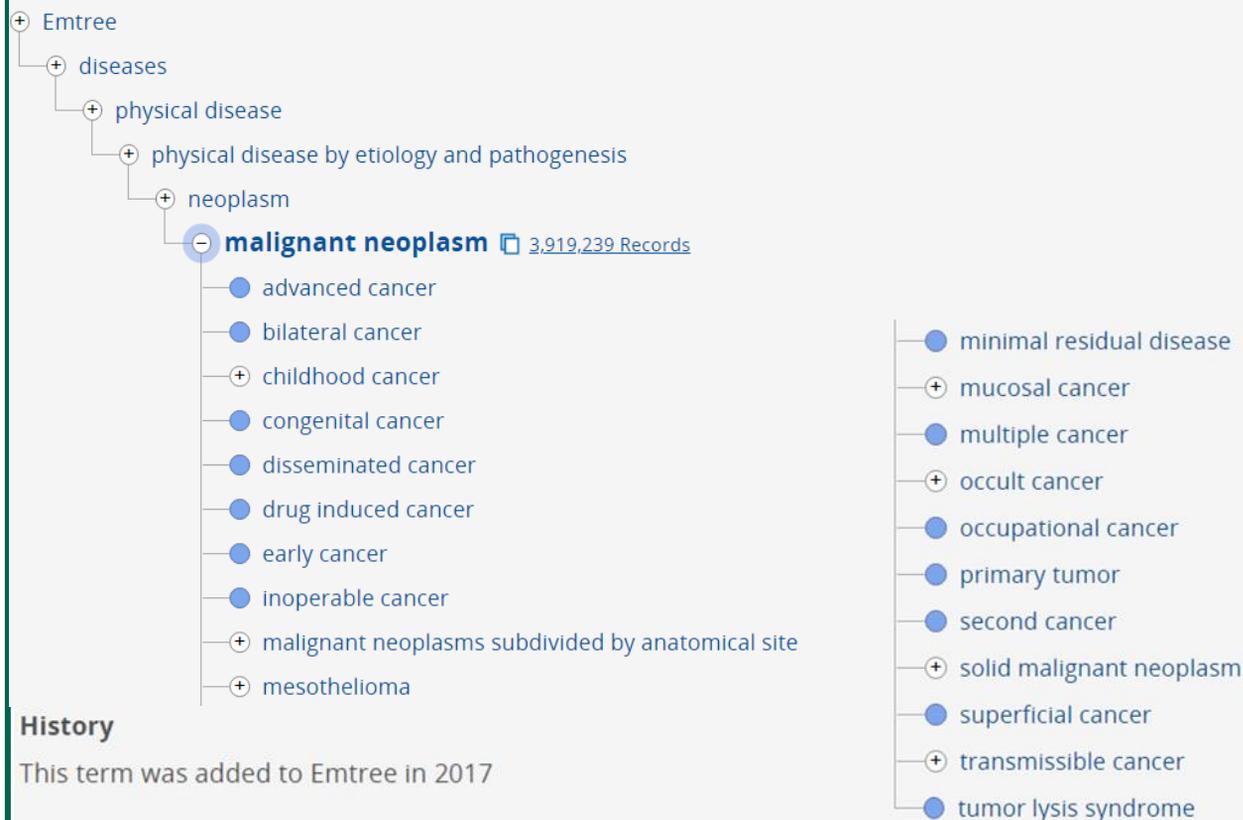
You can click on any broader or narrower SH of interest for its information page and to add it to your search.

For term: 'malignant neoplasm'

Extend your search: Explode As major focus

Take this query to Disease Search >

Add



History

This term was added to Emtree in 2017

Synonyms

cancer; cancers; malignant neoplasia; malignant neoplastic disease; malignant tumor; malignant tumour; neoplasia; malignant

3. Searching!

To search with the SH of interest, you can search directly for that term by selecting "take this query..." (3a) OR you can add it to a Query Builder where you will add additional SHs and/or keywords (3b).



Take this query to Disease Search >

Add to Query Builder >



4. To build a search of Subject Headings, repeat steps 2-3b until all the SHs you want are entered.

In this example, we are interested in research on comorbidity of cancer and Parkinson's. After 'malignant neoplasm' is in the Query Builder, search for Parkinson's and then add it to the

Query Builder ▲
Build a multi-term search query

'malignant neoplasm'/exp

Search > Take to Advanced Search >

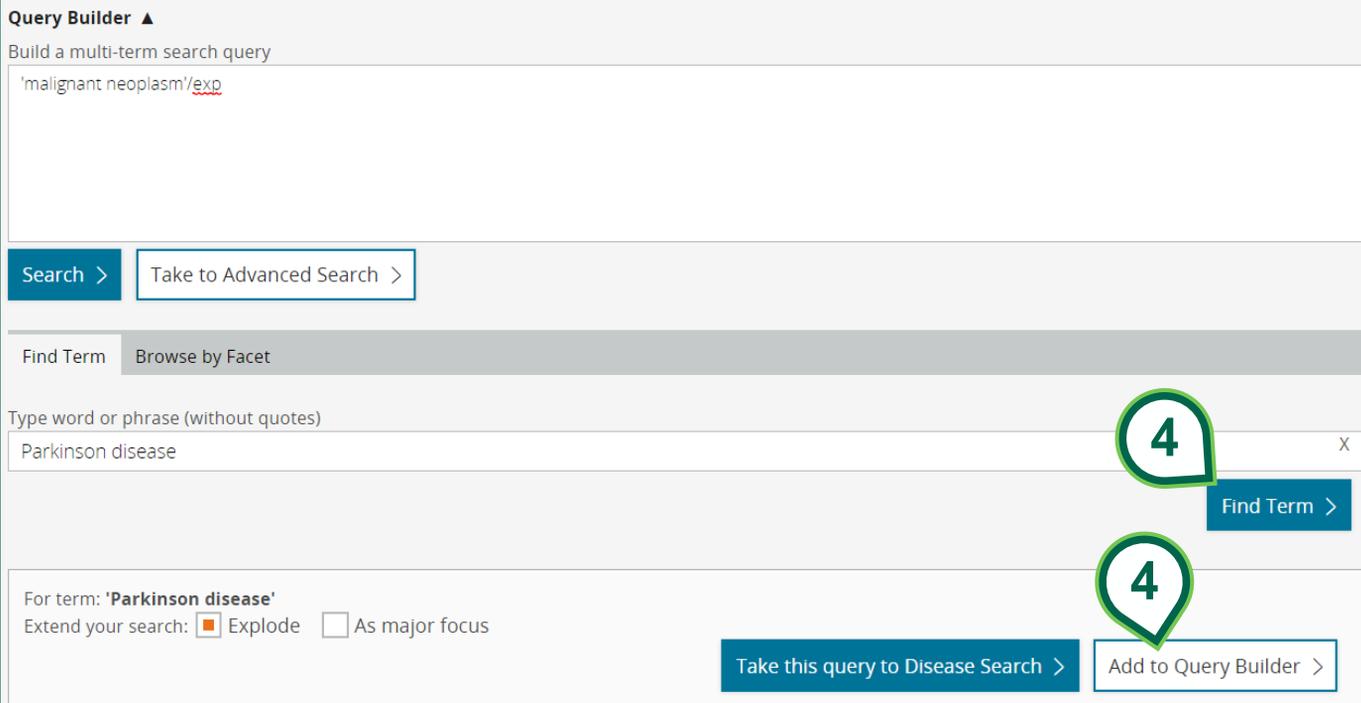
Find Term Browse by Facet

Type word or phrase (without quotes)
Parkinson disease X

Find Term >

For term: 'Parkinson disease'
Extend your search: Explode As major focus

Take this query to Disease Search > Add to Query Builder >



****Be aware that Embase automatically combines terms with OR. You need to change the OR to AND.****

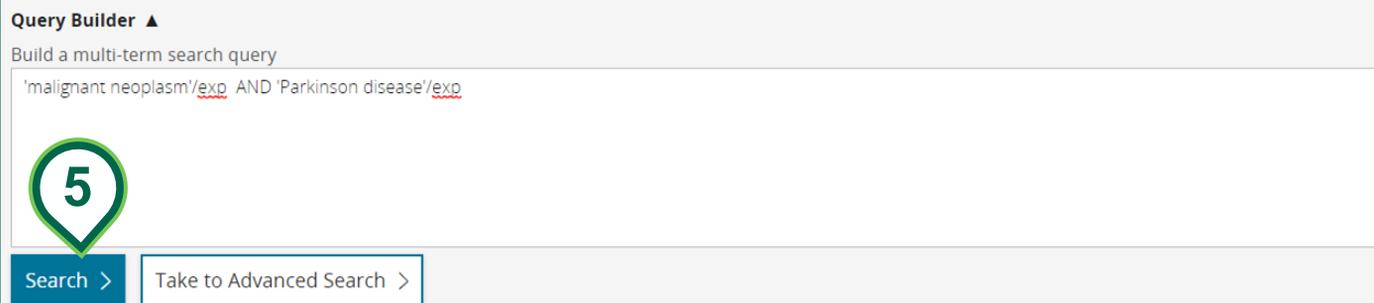
5. Once all of the desired Subject Headings are in the Query Builder with the desired connectors, select "Search."

Query Builder ▲
Build a multi-term search query

'malignant neoplasm'/exp AND 'Parkinson disease'/exp

5

Search > Take to Advanced Search >



6. Note, you can also select Advanced Search to further add limits. Limits can also be added after a search on the results page.

'malignant neoplasm'/exp AND 'parkinson disease'/exp

Search > Mapping ▾ Date ▾ Sources ▾ Fields ▾ Quick limits ▾ EBM ▾ Pub. types ▾ Languages ▾ Gender ▾ Age ▾ Animal ▾

Results Filters

+ Expand - Collapse all Apply >

6

History Save | Delete | Print view | Export | Email Combine >

#1 'malignant neoplasm'/exp AND 'parkinson disease'/exp

