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MEDLINE VS EMBASE

Prior to starting a search, it is essential to choose the most appropriate database. The principal sources used to search topics related to biomedicine and health Medline and Embase.

What are their characteristics?

	Medline	Embase[1]
Focus	Biomedicine and health	Broad biomedical scope with in-depth **coverage of drugs and pharmacology**
Produced by	US National Library of Medicine	Elsevier
Access	Available free of charge via PubMed OR Through institutional subscription via Ovid. Available via MUHC libraries portal muhclibraries.ca > Quick Links section	Through institutional subscription via Ovid. Available via MUHC libraries portal muhclibraries.ca > Quick Links section
Content	Journal articles, mostly from peer-reviewed journals	Journal articles, mostly from peer-reviewed journals + **conference abstracts since 2009**
# of records	Over 30 million Including 26 million indexed for Medline	Over 32 million, **including all Medline records** (i.e. 6 million are unique to Embase)
# of journals	5,244 indexed for Medline	Almost 8,500**, including Medline unique journals** (i.e. more than 2900 journals unique to Embase)

[1] https://www.elsevier.com/solutions/embase-biomedical-research/embase-coverage-and-content

The searcher should also be familiar with differences in the establishment of subject headings in each database. These differences impact the way we search and the results.

	Medline MeSH	Embase Emtree[2]
# of terms	29,351	Over 75,000 (of which **more than 32,000 are drugs and chemicals**)
# of subheadings	83	78 (of which **64 are drug subheadings including routes of drug administration**)
Synonyms	681,505[3]	320,000
Thesaurus update	Annually Drug terms are included when they become established	**3 times per year** Drug terms are included early in the drug development process
# of terms per article	10-20	**3-4 major terms, and up to 50 minor terms**.[4]
		Medline-derived articles are not indexed with Emtree terms. However MeSH terms are mapped to Emtree terms to provide indexing compatible with Embase indexing.

When searching information related to drugs, Embase offers more options than Medline. In addition, it is currently the most exhaustive biomedical literature database since Medline unique records are included in it.

However, the extensive coverage and deeper indexing of articles of Embase has drawbacks. If you don't need an extensive search, you may want to:

- Use subheadings to qualify the searched terms
- Search for your main term with the "major" status (also called focus in Ovid).

Whether you are wondering which resource to use or how to do a search, your librarians are available to respond to questions or provide you with any help that you need. Contact us.

[2] https://p.widencdn.net/3uymbu/ELSV-13380-Embase-Emtree-factsheet-Final-WEB-r0
[3] https://www.nlm.nih.gov/bsd/disted/clinics/mesh_2016_qa.html
[4] https://www.elsevier.com/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/92104/Embase-Indexing-Guide.pdf