INTRODUCTION

Discussing critically epistemological issues in research as well as the conceptualization and prioritization of research in public health are important skills for the conduction of meaningful studies. There are several steps a researcher has to complete before embarking on data collection. He or she must review the literature and synthesize it, identifying theories, and gaps in knowledge. This makes it possible to refine the research question, write appropriate hypotheses and pinpoint the relevance of the study. To be able to write a good literature review, it is important to become informed consumers of published research.

In this unit, you will learn how to design, refine and conduct a meaningful literature search for the topic you have chosen to research using PubMed and other databases. You will also learn how to use a reference manager program (Endnote). Barbara Folb, MLS, is a guest professor who has written this unit’s instructor’s notes dealing with literature searches. Additionally, you will learn how to recognize an adequate literature review and how to write one.

Note that this class will be held in the Posvar Hall Computing Lab. Ms. Barbara Folb will teach the database and RefWorks portions.

SESSION OUTLINE

- Lecture: Organizing, and conducting a search using Medline and other databases
- Activity: conducting a search for your project
- Demonstration: Using Endnote to store and organize your citations
- Lecture: The literature review and critique
- Discussion of Assignment 1

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this session, you will be able to:

1. Plan and perform a focused literature search using Medline
2. Plan and perform a focused literature search using other databases
3. Explain the benefits of using a reference manager program to write academic work
4. Explain the objectives of a literature review.
5. Plan a literature review about a given topic
6. Describe the parts of a standard public health research article.
7. Critically assess published research.
As you work through the readings, pay close attention to the terms and concepts listed above in **bold**. You should try to write a definition/explanation of each key term/concept in your own words.

### IN PREPARATION FOR CLASS...

1. Print the file “Steps in Planning and Implementing a Literature Search” found right here in Unit 3.

2. If you have never used PubMed or are not familiar with it, please go to the PubMed Tutorial page (http://www.nlm.nih.gov/bsd/disted/pubmed.html) and view the following Quick Tour for some basic searching information.

   PubMed Simple Subject Search Example

3. Sign up for a MyNCBI account.

   Where to sign up for MyNCBI account?
   Please go to [www.hsls.pitt.edu](http://www.hsls.pitt.edu), click on Resources tab at the top of the page, and then choose PubMed under Quick Links on the left of the page. Registration for a My NCBI account is located at the top right corner.

### CLASS ACTIVITY: CONDUCT YOUR OWN LITERATURE SEARCH

Conduct a literature search. For this, use the research question and hypotheses you have created. Ms Folb will be available to assist you if you need help. The idea is that you practice your skills and at the same time, you get ahead in your project.

### UNIT PRACTICE, ASSIGNMENTS, PROJECTS

Unit 3 Practice part a: Literature search for your project.
Unit 3 Practice part b: Preliminary literature review for your project.
Assignment 1: Critical Review of a Research Article
Course Project: Start working on your topic. This is due at the end of the term.
**There is no quiz for this unit.**