CINAHL Searching: A Concept-by-Concept Approach

The CINAHL search box is configured to Suggest Subject Terms from CINAHL’s subject bank, which is made up of subject headings specific to nursing and allied health. For this reason, we use the Concept-by-Concept approach, searching one concept at a time and then combining our searches and applying our limits. Follow these steps for effective CINAHL searches:

1. Enter your first concept in the search box and Search
2. Select Major Concept for the most appropriate subject –this will ensure that the subject you have chosen is a main focus of every article retrieved
3. Click on Search Database
4. A Search History will appear that will provide a record of each search you run. We’ll come back to this after we’ve added the second concept
5. Enter your second concept in the search box and Search
6. Select Major Concept for the most appropriate subject
7. Click on Search Database
8. Using the Search History, select the searches you want to combine
9. Click on Search with AND
10. Under Refine Results on the left-hand side of the screen, go to the bottom of the Limit To section and click on Show More
11. Select the limits that you want to apply to your results. Options include but are not limited to: Research Article, Publication Date (e.g.2012 to 2017), Sex, Age, etc.
   Note: For EIDM searching, use the Clinical Queries limit.
12. View your results

Note: The same search method can be applied to Medline (EBSCOhost).