Dissect Your Research Topic

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Dissecting your research topic helps you identify concepts or keywords to use as you search for information. It helps you identify what you already know, provides you with an opportunity to think about your research topic in new ways, and identifies gaps in your knowledge.

This should be completed **before** you begin your initial database search in a library database.

**Directions**

1. Write your **initial research topic** in the space below and **underline** the keywords or keyword phrases.

   **Non-resident immigrants** experience a difference in the level of access to **dental care** afforded by those with **citizenship**.

2. Search your underlined keywords in MeSH and then write the keywords that had MeSH equivalents in separate boxes. If there are broader or narrower keywords in the tree, consider those as well. Then brainstorm some “layman’s” keywords for each box. You will use different combinations of these when you do your initial database searches for review/original research articles.

   **Original Keyword/Phrase:**  
   **Undocumented Immigrants**
   - Undocumented
     - Immigrants[Mesh]
   - Non-resident aliens
   - Citizenship
   - Migrant workers

   **Original Keyword/Phrase:**  
   **Dental Care**
   - Dental
     - Dental Health Services[Mesh]
   - Health Risk
   - Periodontal
   - Oral Health
   - Mouth[mesh]

   **Original Keyword/Phrase:**  
   **Access**
   - Observational Study[publication type]
   - Cohort Study
   - Case control study
   - Facilitators
   - Barriers
   - Risk Assessment[Mesh]

AND _________________________ my search

OR _________________________ my search

Parenthesis keep like keywords _________________________ in my search

Quotation marks look for exact _________________________ in my search

An asterisk* searches for _________________________ of my keyword

Worksheet adapted from the Univ. of Illinois by Paige Dhyne, Science Librarian at Furman University; Last updated 09/19