Optimizing PubMed Using My NCBI: Part 2

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The basic My NCBI settings discussed in the June issue are a great beginning; this column focuses on additional customizations.

A fundamental function of My NCBI is saving searches and creating alerts. You may want to save time and not recreate searches for which you want periodic results, save searches that work well, save searches that experts assisted with or be alerted by email about new results. The mechanism to do so is relatively simple.

Saving a search and creating an alert:
- Run a search in PubMed.
- From the results page, click Create Alert (which is immediately under the search box).
- Follow the directions on the next page to save the search.
- The default name for the search is the search term itself. Rename this to be something more intuitive and meaningful.
- Click Test Search Terms to be sure the search works.
- Decide if you want new results for the search to be emailed to you or not. If not, choose no and save the search. It will be saved in your My NCBI account in the Saved Searches section. From that, you will be able to see the last time it was run, how many new results it has and run it again. If so, choose the schedule for receiving the new results and the format in which you want them to be sent. For the number of items to be sent, consider changing that to the maximum if you want to see all the new results in email without logging in.

Saving a Search for a Specific Journal
One of the most common questions I receive is how to search for a specific journal in PubMed. A search for *JAVMA* works well as a keyword search because there are going to be few, if any, instances of *JAVMA* appearing in PubMed that are not citations to articles in the journal *JAVMA Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*. Searching for the journal *Veterinary Pathology* is more challenging. At the time of this writing, a search for "veterinary pathology" as a journal title returns 4,991 results, as a MeSH subject heading returns 492 results and as two keywords returns 96,930 results.

To search for the content of a journal, there are a couple of techniques. One is:
- Go to the advanced search in PubMed (link directly below the main search box).
- Use the dropdown arrow to change All Fields to Journal.
- Enter the journal name (for example, *Veterinary Pathology*).
- Search.
- The results should all be articles from the journal you searched.
- Save the search, if you choose to.

Custom Filters
In the last issue, this column covered how to use your My NCBI account to activate some of PubMed's pre-constructed filters for your results. You also can create custom filters.

You can turn any search into a filter; among the most useful are searches for results from specific journals. Doing this means you have chosen a specific journal(s), and no matter what you search for in PubMed, you can limit to these journals in one click. You may have access to specific journals and want to limit to those journals. Your specialty may rely heavily on specific journals. You may want to do a very broad search and limit to specific journals.

To create, for example, a custom filter for articles found in *JAVMA* or *JVIM*:
- Search for each as above.
- Copy each search from the PubMed search bar onto another document so that you can copy/paste it into your custom filter.
- Click My NCBI.
- Click Filters.
- Click Manage Filters.
- Click Create Custom Filter.
- Paste in the searches with OR between.
- Test the filter.
- Create a search name.
- Click Save Filter.

This should now display on the right side of your results screen. Try it. A dramatic example is limiting a paratuberculosis search to *JAVMA* or *JVIM*. There are nearly 4,000 results, but fewer than 100 are in these two journals. **TV**