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Healthy People 2020 Structured Evidence Queries: Facilitating access to published research for public health planning and policy development

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Introduction

Healthy People 2020, from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), provides national objectives to guide health promotion and disease prevention efforts in the United States. The objectives provide a framework to monitor and measure improvements in health status of the American population over the decade from 2010 to 2020. Public health program planning/policy development to improve community health should be informed by the best available and most current research evidence.

Purpose

The purpose of the Healthy People 2020 Structured Evidence Queries (SEQs) is to reduce the time and increase the precision of finding and accessing research literature to support the development of evidence-based actions to achieve Healthy People 2020 objectives.

The National Library of Medicine (NLM) collaborated with the HHS Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion to develop structured evidence queries, pre-formulated search strategies of NLM's PubMed database to retrieve citations to published research literature to support the development of healthy people objectives. The SEQs are integrated with the HealthyPeople.gov website. Users retrieve the most recent PubMed research articles indexed for MEDLINE on Healthy People objectives each time a SEQ is searched. The SEQs are formulated by librarians and reviewed by subject experts.

These include the SEQs for the 10 leading health indicators, 56 Healthy People objectives. The search queries will be periodically updated and refined and will ultimately be available for all Healthy People 2020 objectives.

Methods

The structured queries were developed by librarians, working in consultation with subject matter experts from federal agencies. The librarians selected Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) and text words to develop optimal search strategies to retrieve research articles on achieving specific Healthy People 2020 objectives.

Subject matter experts from the Federal Interagency Healthy People Workgroup reviewed each search query for accuracy and relevancy. Each finished SEQ retrieves a manageable number of citations to the best available and most current research evidence.

Outcomes

The Healthy People SEQs website is organized by Healthy People topic areas. At the current time, structured evidence queries for 289 health objectives in 23 topic areas have been formulated by librarians and reviewed by subject experts. These include the SEQs for all objectives related to the Healthy People 2020 Leading Health Indicators, a subset of high-priority health issues that represent significant threats to the public’s health. An additional 116 SEQs in 7 topic areas are undergoing expert review and are available in beta version; SEQs for the remaining 12 topic areas are under active development.

The SEQs are integrated with the HealthyPeople.gov website. Users retrieve the most recent research articles indexed for MEDLINE on Healthy People objectives each time a SEQ is searched. The search strategies can be modified in PubMed to address particular practice and research needs. Information on how to modify and save searches, filter search results, and receive automatic email updates of research literature is provided in the FAQs section of the site.

Conclusion

Healthy People 2020 Structured Evidence Queries facilitate access to peer-reviewed research evidence to achieve national health promotion and disease prevention objectives. The search queries will be periodically updated and refined and will ultimately be available for all Healthy People 2020 objectives.

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