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## MDs and OSLER: the search is on

More than 1000 physicians have now registered for the CMA's free OSLER (Ovid Search: Link to Electronic Resources) service, which allows them to take advantage of free database searching, supported by a full-time medical librarian.

The growing number of registrants means that more and more questions about MEDLINE, the Ovid search interface and technical problems are arriving at the OSLER support desk at CMA House. I will review some of the most common queries we receive because this may help new registrants avoid speed-bumps and detours.

*I registered for OSLER online last night and had great results with my first MEDLINE search. Today I went back to the site, clicked on Begin Searching, entered my user name and password, and received a message: "Activation Failed. Retry?" I tried 3 more times without success, and now I've been "Locked out." What's wrong?*

Use of OSLER is restricted to CMA members, and site security depends on the accurate entry of user names and passwords. If an "Activation Failed" message appears, check for typing mistakes in either the numeric user name or the password. During registration, many users have inadvertently created a password with their Caps Lock key on, and the system will accept the password only in caps. After 3 attempts to enter an incorrect password, the system reacts by "locking" the account. If this happens, you can request password resetting by contacting the OSLER support librarian.

*I was interrupted by a phone call during a search. When I returned to the computer I was told: "Your session has timed out. Please re-enter your ID and password." I did this, but was told: "Incorrect ID/password or your account has been blocked." How do I continue searching?*

If you leave the computer for 15 minutes or longer, OVID automatically logs you off to free access for other searchers. The OVID screen that pops up and requests your ID and password is designed for those with individual accounts, not for those who enter the Web Gateway via the CMA's OSLER service. To resume searching you will have to close Netscape or Internet Explorer, reopen it, and go to [www.cma.ca/osler](http://www.cma.ca/osler) again. Unfortunately, your interrupted search history will have disappeared. This is why you should save your search strategy at least temporarily during your session, and choose to Include Search Strategy when you save, email or print your searches.

*I finally found the perfect reference for my clinical question. After reading the abstract, I knew that I should read the entire article. I clicked on the link "Complete Reference" and saw a list of headings and the abstract again, but the full text was not there. Where can I find that article online?*

Our OSLER system doesn't provide full-text articles yet, but we are looking at adding that feature. Even with a full-text option, not all journals are available electronically, and some are unlikely to appear on the World Wide Web at any time. There are many sources you can turn to for articles. The closest hospital or university library should be your first choice, followed by the Canadian Institute for Scientific and Technical Information at [www.nrc.ca/cisti](http://www.nrc.ca/cisti). OSLER users in

Western Canada can contact the library at the College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC in Vancouver (604 733-6671). If you have questions about other potential sources, contact the OSLER support librarian.

*I fine-tuned a search until I was retrieving exactly what I needed. I saved my strategy permanently so I could check again next month to see if new articles had appeared. When I chose "Run Saved Search" the strategy was gone! What happened?*

All CMA OSLER users enter OVID through our CMA server, so to OVID all searchers appear to be a single person. We all have access to the identical list of saved searches. Practise cyber courtesy by deleting only your own saved strategies, and leave intact any on the list of saved searches that your colleagues have placed there. Simply saving or printing your search strategy with each search you perform is a sure way to keep that hard-earned "perfect search."

Questions and comments are always welcome at the OSLER Support Desk. Please send messages to [cmalibrary@sympatico.ca](mailto:cmalibrary@sympatico.ca) or call 800 663-7336, x2255. — Deidre Green, OSLER support librarian



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