

HANDOUT 1A: RESEARCHING YOUR CASE

Here are **three steps** for completing your initial research.

1. Determine your group role

“**Physicians**” will search the medical literature, to find medical and scientific sources relevant to the case. These sources should mostly be **empirical/scientific** (i.e., descriptive). The physicians’ report should explain any medical terms in the case, and discuss the literature relevant to the illness or condition involved in the case. Physicians are experts in diagnosis, treatment, and determinations of prognosis. They are also directly responsible for obtaining informed consent, and so should have a solid grasp on medical decision making and the elements of informed consent. Most of the articles cited by the physician should be empirical studies (or, they may be review articles that review empirical studies) that present data related to the case.

“**Nurses**” or “allied health” should also understand the major medical terms in the case. Persons in this role should search the medical literature for information specifically about the practical aspects of care—particularly things like side-effects associated with different medical interventions, complications and symptoms associated with any medical conditions in the case, psychological aspects of the case, family and social relations that may affect the case, etc. These sources should mostly be **empirical/scientific** (i.e., descriptive).

“**Philosophers**” will search for articles dealing with the ethical and philosophical aspects of the case. You may want to add the keywords “ethics” or “philosophy” to your searches, so that you pull up more relevant search results. These sources should mostly be **normative** (i.e., prescriptive) and philosophical in nature. One way of narrowing your search to philosophical articles is by looking for terms like “philosophy,” “ethics,” or “bioethics” in the journal title (For example, *American Journal of Bioethics* contains many philosophical articles).

“**Editors**” should also find 5 articles that they think will help them to write about the “interdisciplinary” aspects of the case. These articles can be about any relevant aspect of the case—scientific, practical, or ethical. Searching for “interdisciplinary” as a keyword, along with other terms relevant to your case, may turn up some articles that are directly relevant to your report. Although the editor role has more flexibility in the kinds of sources used for the report, editors are responsible for thinking about the contribution of all three roles (philosopher, doctor, nurse) to finding an interdisciplinary resolution to the case. So it may be helpful to try to find a mix of normative and empirical articles, or even to find some articles that discuss both philosophical and scientific aspects of an issue or case in an interdisciplinary way.

2. Get acquainted with your case

Read your case carefully and think about what kinds of issues might be relevant to resolving the **main ethical problem** in your case. If you do not understand some of the terms or concepts in the case, you might consult a medical dictionary for definitions or more information. Click on the link below (or do a Google search for free online medical dictionaries).

**Note: medical dictionaries do NOT count as one of the five academic sources for your annotated bibliography. Medical dictionaries are just good sources of background information.

[WebMD Dictionary](#)

3. Find primary sources for your annotated bibliography and paper

Primary Sources

Off-campus access to CityTech's library databases:

<https://library.citytech.cuny.edu/research/articles/letter>

From this page, navigate to any of the following databases by either searching or navigating to the appropriate letter of the alphabet.

Google scholar

[Google scholar](#) can be reached through the CityTech Library "Find Articles" page, or go here: <http://cityte.ch/gschol>. Accessing articles through the library ensures that you will get access to them if City Tech subscribes to the journal in which they appear.

Google Scholar is a smart browser: you can insert questions, ideas, keywords, authors, etc, into the search box, and it will bring up relevant results.

Or, you can do an advanced search. Click on the three horizontal lines in the upper right hand corner, then go to "Advanced Search."

In the right-hand column of your search results, it will tell you if the PDF of the article is available somewhere on the web, and also if we have access to it at City Tech. Again, click on the ones you want to download.

CINAHL

CINAHL (Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature) is a database that is particularly relevant to the nursing role.

You can find CINAHL in the CityTech Library list of databases, or go here: <http://cityte.ch/cinahl>.

CINAHL contains “subject headings.” Try searching for “MJ Word in Major Subject Headings” to find articles all about a single subject. Or, leave the category as “Select a Field (Optional)” to search keywords.

In many cases, there is a direct link to the full text PDF in the search results. Or, you can click the link that says, “Find it! @CUNY”