



## ADVISOR REVIEWS—STANDARD REVIEW

## CINAHL Ultimate

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Composite Score: ★★★★★ 5/6

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## Abstract

The Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL) Ultimate is a subscription aggregate health and allied health sciences database available exclusively from EBSCO. CINAHL Ultimate is the premier product in a lineup of five tiered versions, including CINAHL, CINAHL with Full Text, CINAHL Plus with Full Text, and CINAHL Complete. The database is widely used by educators, students, researchers, and practitioners. CINAHL Ultimate is valued for its substantial indexing of publications core to the nursing and allied health field, use of the MeSH structure for subject headings, and numerous options for advanced searching specific to the needs of the health sciences. The collection indexes more than 3,800 journals beginning in 1937, with 925 being offered full text from non-open access journals and with a substantial number with no embargo. In particular, the number of full-text, peer-reviewed journals with no embargo available from non-open access sources is a significant upgrade from CINAHL Complete, and one that may very likely justify the additional investment. Value-added features include accredited continuing education modules, evidence-based care sheets, and quick lessons. With contributing publishers from 73 countries, the majority hail from the United States and the United Kingdom. Some potential drawbacks for those considering CINAHL Ultimate may be the lack of video-based continuing education content and source material beyond academic journals, as well as the limited emphasis on international perspectives; such perspectives may be more evident in competitors such as ProQuest's Nursing & Allied Health Premium and MEDLINE Ultimate.

## Pricing Options

Access is by annual subscription. Pricing for academic institutions is based on a variety of factors, including but not limited to FTE, existing EBSCO databases, consortium agreements, and/or buying groups. Libraries should contact EBSCO for a customized quote (Donnelly 2021).

## Product Overview/Description

The Cumulative Index to Nursing & Allied Health Literature (CINAHL) is a subscription aggregate database that supports nursing and allied health research and is of great value to academic libraries that support health sciences programs and to medical libraries serving the information needs of healthcare professionals. CINAHL originated as the print index "Cumulative Index to Nursing Literature" in 1961. The product has been under the ownership of EBSCO Industries since 2003 and available exclusively on the EBSCOhost research platform since 2006. CINAHL is available in five tiered versions: CINAHL, CINAHL with Full

Text, CINAHL Plus with Full Text, CINAHL Complete, and CINAHL Ultimate.

CINAHL Ultimate, the most recent upgraded tier available from the product family, is described as "the new definitive resource for nursing and allied health research, providing full text for more of the most used journals in the CINAHL index than any other database." The database covers more than 50 nursing specialties along with leading allied health subjects such as occupational therapy, speech and language pathology, and physical therapy. The product website indicates that there are 3,882 active journals indexed, which is 149 more than is available in CINAHL Complete. This total includes more than 1,200 open access journals. With regard to non-open access journals, CINAHL Ultimate provides 925 full-text journals (375 more than CINAHL Complete), 725 peer-reviewed journals (312 more than CINAHL Complete), and 475 journals with no embargo (255 more than CINAHL Complete). The product website further compares the retail value of its active full-text, non-open access journals at \$463,937.10 versus a value of \$273,904.48 from CINAHL Complete. Indexing begins in 1937, with full text available from 1962, which is equivalent for all three top tiers of the product (EBSCO n.d.a).

In analyzing the database coverage list available from the product website, 90% of the titles are identified as core, with the remainder identified as priority. There are contributing journals from 73 countries, of which 43% are from the United States and 28% are from the United Kingdom, with the remainder of the countries making up 5% or less of the collection. Academic journals compose 74% of the collection, with just 21% of the holdings being magazines and 2% being trade publications. There are currently a small number of books and monographs available, at 52 titles. It should be noted that there is just one dissertation in the collection at the time of this analysis. Value-added content includes 169 quick lessons, 133 evidence-based care sheets, 170 continuing education (CEU) modules, and 254 research instruments with equivalent coverage in all three top tiers of CINAHL Ultimate.

CINAHL Ultimate is fully compatible with EBSCO Discovery Service (EDS) and is purportedly compatible with other commercial discovery services, such as ProQuest's Summon. However, the lack of sharing of metadata between EBSCO and non-EBSCO vendors results in differences in metadata and record formats across vendors and platforms, which can cause difficulties with OpenURL linking. Thus, libraries using discovery services other than EDS should keep in mind that linking to content in CINAHL Complete may be somewhat unreliable and that searching the database individually may be more effective.

MARC records are available and comply with MARC21 standards. Usage statistics can be monitored by administrators

through COUNTER-compliant reports. Additional administrative features include custom branding, the ability to configure search results and display preferences, language settings, and the ability to create and manage local collections. The EBSCOhost platform is partially conformant with WCAG 2.1 level AA. Conformance issues are primarily related to third party content. EBSCO has indicated these issues will be resolved with the introduction of a new platform, with improved accessibility to be available in 2022–2023. EBSCOhost is compatible with a number of assistive technologies (EBSCO n.d.b). Technical support is provided via EBSCO Connect 24/7 by e-mail or telephone. EBSCO provides a number of tutorials for effectively using the product from its website.

### User Interface/Navigation/Searching

CINAHL Ultimate is available on the user-friendly and easily navigable EBSCOhost platform, which has the capability of being cross-searched with other EBSCO products. The product is accessible with any internet-enabled device. Compatible browsers include Firefox, Safari, Google Chrome, Microsoft Edge, and Internet Explorer. Android and iOS mobile devices may be used by downloading the EBSCO app.

Users can set up a My EBSCOhost account, which will enable them to save searches and results to their folder as well as to create an alert for publications on topics of interest. The utility toolbar provides the options of a New Search; Publications; CINAHL Subject Headings; Evidence-Based Care Sheets; Quick Lessons; and More, which provides the option to search cited references, images, and indexes. From the main search page, users can choose to conduct a basic search or advanced search, view their search history, or create an alert. Create Alert remains present next to the search box as the user navigates the database (see Figure 1).

When a basic search is performed, enabling the option Apply Equivalent Subjects expands the search to include the exact terms

for that concept when a search term matches a known concept in the mapped vocabulary. The search can be limited from the basic search page by standard options such as full text, peer reviewed, publication, and image type. Once a search is performed, additional limiters, such as source type, publisher, language, and subject heading, are available on the left-hand navigation bar of the results page.

In an advanced search, there are many options for refining and limiting results. There are 48 fields available, including major and minor subjects, author affiliation, named person, legal case, and MEDLINE Info. Users can also select limiters from the advanced search page such as publication date, evidence-based practice, CE module, first author as nurse, special interest, clinical queries, and various patient criteria. Users can opt to exclude MEDLINE records and to either include or exclude pre-CINAHL records. For both basic and advanced search, results default to sorting by relevance but can be changed to sort by date, source, or author. CINAHL Ultimate supports Boolean, wildcat, and truncation operators as well as searching by proximity and with parentheses. Figure 2 demonstrates a selection of available search limiters.

CINAHL Ultimate uses a controlled vocabulary, with subject headings following the structure of the National Library of Medicine’s (NLM’s) Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) and with additional specific nursing and allied health headings added as appropriate. The subject headings are arranged hierarchically. Users can select Explode to locate all references indexed to a search term as well as all references indexed to any narrower subject terms. Subject headings can also be restricted to the Major Concept of the record, which restricts results to publications in which that subject heading is the main idea. Users can select both Major Concept and Explode, which will include results with narrower concepts when they are the main focus of that publication (see Figure 3).

Results default to sorting by relevance but can be changed to sort by date, source, or author. Result items can be shared by adding results to a folder, by creating an email or RSS feed alert, or by

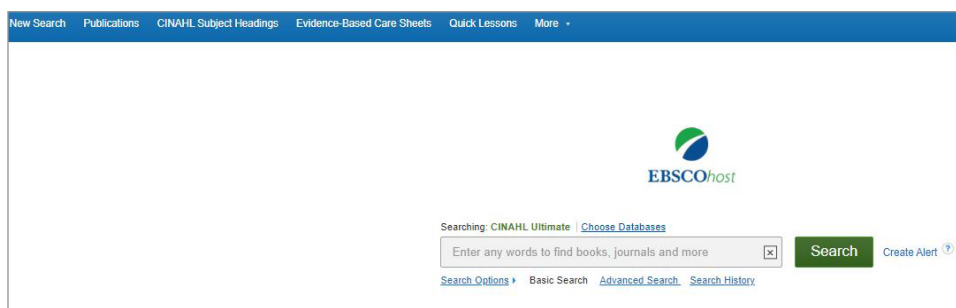


FIGURE 1 CINAHL Ultimate search page

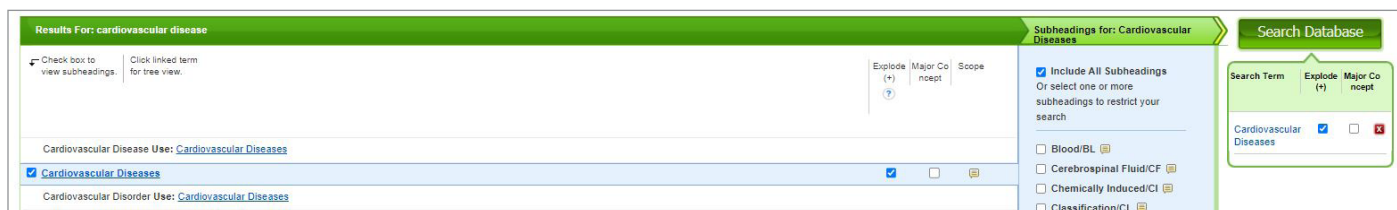


FIGURE 2 Some available search limiters

The screenshot displays the search filters for CINAHL Ultimate, organized into two columns. The left column includes filters for CE Module, Meta-Synthesis, Human, Any Author is Nurse, Journal Subset (with a dropdown menu showing All, Allied Health, Alternative/Complementary Therapies, and Biomedical), Language (with a dropdown menu showing All, Afrikaans, Arabic, and Bosnian), Sex (with a dropdown menu showing All, Female, and Male), Age Groups (with a dropdown menu showing All, Fetus, Conception to Birth, Infant, Newborn: birth-1 month, and Infant: 1-23 months), Number of Pages (with a dropdown menu showing All and an input field), and Image Quick View. The right column includes filters for Evidence-Based Practice, Clinical Queries (with a dropdown menu showing All, Therapy - High Sensitivity, Therapy - High Specificity, and Therapy - Best Balance), First Author is Nurse, Randomized Controlled Trials, Geographic Subset (with a dropdown menu showing Mexico & Central/South America, Middle East, UK & Ireland, and USA), Publication Type (with a dropdown menu showing All, Abstract, Academic Journal, and Advertisement), Pregnancy, Inpatients, Outpatients, Special Interest (with a dropdown menu showing Nursing Education, Nursing Language/Classification, Nutrition, Obstetric Care, and Occupational Therapy), PDF Full Text, and Image Quick View Types (with checkboxes for Black and White Photograph and Chart).

**FIGURE 3** The Major Concept and Explode features of CINAHL Ultimate

permalink. Users can set up a personal account to save searches and results to a folder.

Once selected, a result can be printed or exported to a number of reference management tools such as RefWorks, EndNote, or EasyBib. Users can also obtain a permalink for the record or send it to Google Drive or One Drive.

Evidence-based care sheets and quick lessons can be searched alphabetically or by means of relevancy rank, with results downloadable as a PDF. To access CEU modules, users must first register with the CINAHL education program.

### Critical Evaluation

CINAHL Ultimate is an excellent resource for academics, researchers, and practitioners, with comprehensive subject coverage and a number of value-added features. The most salient aspect of this database that makes it a top choice for libraries is the number of non-open access, peer-reviewed, full-text, and nonembargoed journal titles in comparison to the lower-tiered CINAHL products as well as key competitors, making the decision to upgrade a viable one. Additional features that will make CINAHL Ultimate a product of choice are the number of core publications, subject headings following the MeSH structure, and the ease of navigation by means of the EBSCOhost platform. Additionally, the inclusion of CEU modules, evidence-based care sheets, and quick lessons provides substantial benefit for healthcare professionals.

In comparison to the competing database, ProQuest Nursing & Allied Health Premium, CINAHL Ultimate offers more detail regarding the number of holdings in its collection that are non-open access. It remains unclear how many of the 700 peer-reviewed journals in the Nursing & Allied Health Premium collection are

open access on the basis of the information provided on the product's website. However, a potential drawback of CINAHL Ultimate is its lack of clinical training videos such as those made available by Nursing & Allied Health Premium, instead relying upon less dynamic content such as text-based quick lessons and evidence-based care sheets. The breadth of available source types beyond academic journals is also more limited in CINAHL Ultimate in comparison to Nursing & Allied Health Premium and EBSCO's MEDLINE Ultimate, which offer gray literature, such as dissertations, that may also be of particular value to researchers. Finally, while CINAHL Ultimate contains publications from 73 countries, it does not appear to be as focused on international applications as its competitors.

### Competitive Products

Numerous health sciences databases are available for information consumers. Two such potential competitors of CINAHL Ultimate to consider are ProQuest's Nursing & Allied Health Premium and EBSCO's MEDLINE Ultimate. All three databases are subscription based and make use of MeSH in their indexing. Whereas CINAHL Ultimate is proprietary to EBSCO and Nursing & Allied Health Source is proprietary to ProQuest, MEDLINE is available in a variety of iterations from a number of vendors, including the freely available PubMed. The databases differ primarily in the breadth of coverage, user interface, and availability of value-added features.

Nursing & Allied Health Premium uses the ProQuest platform and is the most direct competitor of CINAHL Ultimate. This database focuses on supporting "the teaching, learning, and research needs of nursing and allied health students and educators." The Premium offering of this product combines the Nursing & Allied



## CINAHL Ultimate Review Scores Composite: ★★★★★ 5/6

*The maximum number of stars in each category is 5.*

### Content: ★★★★★

A robust collection with a significant proportion of peer-reviewed, full-text, non–open access journals with no embargo. The database is somewhat lacking in the use of text-based CEU resources, has limited emphasis on international resources, and is composed largely of academic journals rather than a range of source types.

### User Interface/Searchability: ★★★★★ 1/2

The interface is easily navigated via the EBSCOhost platform. Holdings are expertly indexed using MeSH. The abundance of options to refine an advanced search are an advantage of this product. The platform is partially compliant with WCAG 2.1 level AA accessibility standards. The lack of sharing of metadata between EBSCO and other commercial database vendors may complicate the ability to reliably link to records for those not using EDS as their discovery service.

### Pricing: NA

As a direct quote was not provided by EBSCO, it is difficult to assess this area. Pricing for academic institutions is based on a variety of factors, including but not limited to FTE, existing EBSCO databases, consortium agreements, and/or buying groups.

### Purchase/Contract Options: ★★★★★

Contract provisions are standard for the product, allowing for remote access and ILL within the scope of copyright laws.

Health Database with Nursing & Education Video, provided by the ProQuest subsidiary Alexander Street. The product website indicates holdings of 700 peer-reviewed journals along with gray literature such as dissertations and case studies. The website does not provide information about the number of indexed journals that are non–open access. Value-added resources are 350 clinical skills videos and CultureGrams World and Province Edition reports, a ProQuest product providing cultural information on countries and provinces, from 200 countries (ProQuest n.d.).

MEDLINE is a well-respected biomedical database from the NLM. MEDLINE is licensed to a number of commercial database vendors, including EBSCO, whose suite of products are MEDLINE with Full Text, MEDLINE Complete, and MEDLINE Ultimate. MEDLINE Ultimate as the premier product in the collection can be compared to CINAHL Ultimate. This product is targeted to offer “medical professionals and researchers access to unmatched evidence-based and peer-reviewed full-text content from more of the top biomedical journals,” with the product website noting that it has more international journal coverage than the lower-tiered MEDLINE databases. The database contains 1,650 full-text, non–open access journals, of which 366 are nonembargoed. There are 1,605 full-text, peer-reviewed, non–open access journals. Unlike CINAHL Ultimate and Nursing & Allied Health Sciences Premium, there are no e-books, dissertations, videos, or other value-added elements such as CEU materials (EBSCO n.d.c).

## Purchase & Contract Provisions

Purchase and contract provisions are outlined in the EBSCO License Agreement and are standard to the product. Remote access

is permitted to patrons of institutions subscribing to the product for personal, noncommercial use, with security procedures in place to prohibit access by nonsubscribing entities. The full terms and conditions may be viewed at <<https://www.ebsco.com/license-agreement>>. Interlibrary loan (ILL) may be used as long as it does not violate the copyright stipulations for the content used and abides by copyright law. EBSCO prefers ILL content to be faxed or provided via print rather than shared electronically.

## Authentication

EBSCO supports many different methods of authentication, including IP address, SAML Single Sign-On, personal user, referring URL, and user ID and password.

**Free Text Keywords:** CINAHL | EBSCO | nursing | allied health | ProQuest Nursing & Allied Health Premium | MEDLINE Ultimate | National Library of Medicine | health sciences | MeSH

**Primary Category:** Medicine, Nursing & Health

**Secondary Categories:** NA

**Type of Product Being Reviewed:** Aggregator database

**Target Audience:** Undergraduate (including community colleges); Graduate/Faculty/Researcher

**Access:** Subscription

## Author's References

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tration, and a Master of Library Science. She has more than 20 years of experience as a master's-level clinical psychologist and continues to work part time in private practice. She serves as Lenoir-Rhyne University library's liaison to the departments of business and economics, mathematics, computer science, human services psychology, and counseling. Ms. Behrend is active in the Association of College and Research Libraries as well as with the North Carolina Library Association, for which she is currently serving as the Vice President/President-Elect. ■