ADVISOR REVIEWS—STANDARD REVIEW Disaster Lit: Database for Disaster Medicine and Public Health

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Composite Score: ★★★★

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Abstract

Disaster Lit: Database for Disaster Medicine and Public Health is created and maintained by the U.S. National Library of Medicine. It is an Open Access database of research literature in disaster medicine and public health. This database provides access to biomedical research, journal research, and grey literature on disaster medicine and public health. It has a well-developed search engine and a good user interface. Disaster Lit is an important database for research in emergency management and disaster preparedness and public health.

Price

Disaster Lit: Database for Disaster Medicine and Public Health is one of the United States National Library of Medicine (NLM) databases of health information freely available on the internet. There is no cost to searching this database however, accessing the full text of some of the content may require a subscription to that publication. Some of the other resources in the database may have licensing and access restrictions including cost for accessing copyright or proprietary data.

Product Overview and Description

U.S. National Library of Medicine (NLM) produces Disaster Lit as part of the functions of the Disaster Information Management Research Center Disaster Information Management Research Center provides comprehensive disaster health information related to natural, accidental, or deliberate disasters and for all stages of disaster management efforts (Koustova, 2010). This management research center promotes access to Disaster Literature; Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosives (CBRNE)/Hazards materials (hazmat) information; Natural and Man-made disasters and Infectious diseases information. In addition, there is access to disaster information specialists. Evidently, Disaster Lit is created for a professional audience. In this case the professional audience are individuals or organizations responsible for the medical and public health aspects of planning, mitigation, response, recovery, and research related to disasters and public health emergencies (NLM 2019).

As a database of disaster medicine and public health information Disaster Lit includes guidelines, reports, proceedings, training, fact sheets in addition to disaster and public health information from PubMed (biomedical journal literature) and MedlinePlus (health information for the public). It also includes 1,400 non-commercial disaster-related resources (NLM, 2019). Although Disaster Lit is an English only resource, it does include international content (NLM, 2019). The following are examples of international content: grey literature from associations, educational institutions, government agencies, and non-government organizations (NGOs) as sources for disaster literature (NLM, 2019) including reports and guidelines from

the World Health Organization. The National Library of Medicine assigns publication type to each resource in the Disaster Lit database. The most common publication types are: Guidelines/Assessment Tool; Report; Instructional/Training Material but also includes the following publication types: Bibliography/Resource List; Book/Book Chapter; Conference/Meeting Material; Database/Dataset; Dictionary/Glossary; Fact Sheet; Hearing/Testimony; Legal Document; Map/Atlas; Reports; Web Page and Website (NLM, 2019). As part of the Disaster Research Response Project, since 2014 Disaster Lit includes records for surveys, interview scripts, and other tools for use in data collection following a disaster.

It is generally expected that information in the public domain should be accessible to all consumers including those with special needs. The U.S. National Library of Medicine (NLM) has a policy to ensure accessibility of websites created by them including Disaster Lit (NLM 2015). National Library of Medicine encourages contacting them for alternative formats if the website is not able to be accessed using special adaptive equipment (NLM 2015).

User Interface and Searching

The user interface for Disaster Lit includes a very simple basic search box (see Figure 1) and an advance search function (see Figure 2). Disaster Lit uses keyword searching across the following fields: title, source, date published, format, annotation, authors, type, access notes and URL (NLM, 2019). Disaster Lit automatically expands keyword searching to include plural, singular and other forms of the word; and it will also automatically search certain synonyms such as typhoon will also search hurricane and cyclone (NLM, 2019). Capitalization is ignored in searching Disaster Lit (NLM, 2019).

Disaster Lit allows for Boolean searching. The Boolean operators that are supported by this database are: AND, OR and NOT. The Boolean operator AND search results contain all the key words; the Boolean operator OR search results contain either keywords; the Boolean operator NOT is used to exclude key words such as "Flu pandemics" NOT Covid-19. The use of quotations provides exact phrase searching (NLM, 2019). Blank search will result in the entire Disaster Lit database being displayed in the search results (NLM, 2019). The advance search feature (see Figure 2) allows you to build a search strategy by searching any or all of the following fields: title, source, publication type, publication year, author, URL and ID; it also provides the use of Boolean operators (AND, OR, and NOT) to build the search (NLM, 2019).

When viewing your results in Disaster Lit you can adjust the number of results on a page; the minimum number of results on a page is 10 and the maximum is 1,000. It is also possible to sort the results by newest first or by source. It is also possible to select the number of results on a page when printing the results, multiple pages of search re-

FIGURE 1 Basic Search Function in Disaster Lit: Database for Disaster Medicine and Public Health

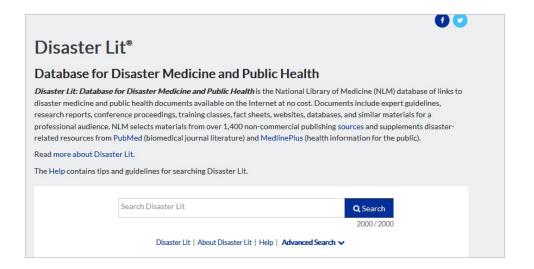
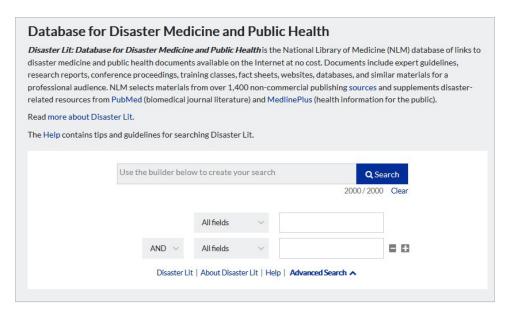


FIGURE 2 Advanced Search Function in Disaster Lit: Database for Disaster Medicine and Public Health

D: 1 1:1(B)



Covid 19	X Q Search
	Disaster Lit About Disaster Lit Help Advanced Search ✓
Refine Your Results	Results 501-677 of 677 Sort by: Newest First V Items per page: 500V 🔗 💄 上
Source	◆ Previous Page 2 of 2 ▶
Enter text to filter	501. ☐ Infectious Disease Toolkit for CoC (Continuum of Care)
Enter text to litter	Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
African Forum for Research and	Date Published: 3/2020
Education in Health (AFREhealth)	Format: Text
[1]	Annotation: This toolkit provides structure and specific examples for planning and responding to influenza, coronavirus such
Alliance for Child Protection in	as ${\color{red}COVID}$ - ${\color{red}19}$, and other infectious diseases. The toolkit consists of three documents that provide information for continuum
Humanitarian Action [2]	of care (CoC) leadership, homeless service providers, and partners to utilize when planning for and responding to infectious
American Academy of Family	diseases. [less]
Physicians (AAFP) [1]	URL: https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/5985/infectious-disease-toolkit-for-cocs/
_ ^ V	Type: Guideline/Assessment Tool
Publication Type	Access Notes: Link to Preventing and Managing the Spread of Infectious Disease for Homelessness:
	https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Infectious-Disease-Toolkit-for- Back to top 🛧 - Managing-the-

FIGURE 3 Covid-19 Search Results in Disaster Lit

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1. Guidance for Discharge and Ending Isolation in the Context of Widespread Community Transmission of COVID-19-First
Update: Technical Report
Source: European Union, European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)
Date Published: 4/8/2020
Format: PDF
Annotation: This eight-page document provides guidance for planning discharge and ending isolation for COVID-19
patients in the context of the phase of ongoing widespread community transmission. There is an increasing need to discharge patients from hospitals early after clinical symptom improvement in order to maintain healthcare capacity for severe and critically ill patients. [less]
URL: https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/covid-19-guidance-discharge-and-ending-isolation
Type: Guideline/Assessment Tool
Access Notes: Direct link to document: https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/covid-19-guidance-discharge-and-ending-isolation-first%20update.pdf
ID: 21616. From: Disaster Lit®a database of the U.S. National Library of Medicine.
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FIGURE 4 Record from a Search on Covid-19

sults cannot be printed simultaneously (NLM, 2019) Figure 3 shows the results of a search in Disaster Lit for "Covid-19."

The following are the descriptive elements that are included in each Disaster Lit record: title of the item; source which is the original publisher of the item; date published is the original date the item was published; format of item is it image, PDF, presentation slide, text or video/multimedia; annotation is a description of the item; URL is the location of the item on the web; author includes the names of the creators of this item; publication type describes the type of publication; access notes includes any information regarding special software to access the item or instructions on accessing the item; ID is a unique identifier for the item in the Disaster Lit database. The record will identify if the resource includes research tools and data collection instruments (NLM, 2019). Figure 4 illustrates all the descriptive elements in a record from a search on Covid-19.

Disaster Lit has filters to refine your search. It is possible to filter your results by source, publication type, publication year, author, and if it includes research tools (NLM, 2019). Figure 5 shows examples of the

Disaster Lit filters. Disaster Lit also provides discovery of disaster health information in other NLM databases by running a Disaster Lit search in PubMed, MedlinePlus and National Institute of Health/National Library of Medicine (NIH/NLM). Please see Figure 6 for an illustration of the finding additional disaster information functionality.

Critical Evaluation

CONTENT

Disaster Lit is targeted towards a professional audience in disaster management and public health and this database covers an extensive variety of content that would be relevant to this audience. There is both breadth and depth covered in the content available in this database. Some of the content indexed by Disaster Lit include biomedical journal literature; consumer public health information; grey literature such as research reports and practice guidelines from government and non-governmental agencies and research data collection tools. The broad coverage and variety of types of publications that may be accessed by searching Disaster Lit is a strength of this database. How-

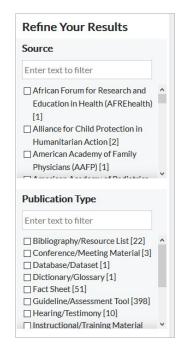




FIGURE 6 Finding Additional Disaster Information



Disaster Lit Review Scores Composite: ★★★★

The maximum number of stars in each category is 5.

Content:

******* 1/2

This database contains biomedical journal literature, consumer public health information, grey literature such as research reports and practice guidelines from government and non-governmental agencies, as well as research data collection tools. However, resources are in English only.

Searchability:

★★★ 1/2

Search interface is clean and intuitive. The database has two different search options, basic and advance search. The basic search as automatic truncation and synonym search, which reduces specificity and transparency of search strategy. The advance search supports the use of Boolean operators but not controlled vocabularies. Search results are sorted by date and source of publication.

Price: N/A

Accessing information in this database is free. However, subscription cost may be required to access full text of some publications and some other resources may have licensing and access restrictions including cost for accessing copyright or proprietary data.

Contract Provisions:

N/A

Searching this database is free.

ever, a weakness in the language of the content is the fact that it is an English only resource.

USER INTERFACE AND SEARCHING

The basic search interface of Disaster Lit is very clean with a single search box. The basic search is also very intuitive and easy to use for a novice researcher by automatically including truncation for searching forms of words such as singular and plural; and using Boolean operator OR for searching synonyms. However, the features of simplifying searching by automatically including truncation of forms of words and synonym searching may be a weakness for the experienced researcher as these features remove control and specificity of the search strategy and makes the search strategy less transparent. Some of the benefits of the advanced search function in Disaster Lit is that it allows you to search a field and build a search strategy using the Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT), however it does not allow for the use of proximity operators (NEAR and WITHIN). A weakness of the advance search function is it does not support controlled vocabulary searching such as Medical Subject Headings that are used in searching PubMed. The basic and advanced search features both allow for phrased keyword searching. The search results in Disaster Lit are listed in order of date of publication (newest to oldest) and alphabetical order by the source of the publication. Disaster Lit does not use relevancy ranking in order to sort search results.

Competitive Products

There does not appear to be a single database that competes directly with Disaster Lit: Database for Disaster Medicine and Public Health. However, there are several databases that cover aspects of the content in Disaster Lit. NIH Disaster Research Response (DR2) provides access to tools that may be used to collect research data during a disaster, emergency or crisis. PubMed and PubMed Central index journal

literature on natural disasters, bioterrorism, chemical terrorism, and pandemic flu (NLM, 2019). Global Index Medicus produced by the World Health Organization provides biomedical and public health literature from an international prospective. Homeland Security Digital Library is a database containing documents related to homeland security in the United States. This homeland security database includes American policy, strategy, and organizational management, including information related to terrorism and natural and man-made disasters (NLM, 2019). The new ProQuest Coronavirus Research Database has a narrower scope than Disaster Lit however both databases include research on the Covid-19 (*The Charleston Advisor* 2020). Whereas the databases referenced above were written primarily for a professional audience and reflect significant content overlap with Disaster Lit, MedlinePlus Disaster and Emergency Topics are written for a general audience.

Contract Provisions

Disaster Lit provides searching for health information freely available on the internet. Some of the content in this database may require a subscription to that publication. Some of the other resources may have licensing and access restrictions.

Contact Information

U.S. National Library of Medicine

8600 Rockville Pike Bethesda, MD 20894 Phone: (888) FINDNLM E-mail: <dimrc@nlm.nih.gov>

URL: https://disasterinfo.nlm.nih.gov/disaster-lit

Free Text Keywords: disaster | disaster medicine | disaster preparedness | emergency management | public health | infectious diseases | hazardous materials

Primary Category: Emergency Management

Secondary Categories: Disaster Medicine; Public Health; Multidisciplinary (or interdisciplinary)

Type of Product being Reviewed: Abstract index database; Aggregator database; Discovery tool; Library tool; Website

Target Audience: Emergency Management Professionals; Public Health Professionals; Researchers

Access Type(s): Open Access

Authentication

This database is freely available; authentication is not necessary.

Author's References

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About the Author

Marcia Salmon is a Digital Scholarship Metadata Librarian and is an active member of the Health, Sciences and Engineering Disciplinary Cluster at the Scott Library at York University in Toronto, Canada. She received an honors B.Sc. in Biology and Applied Educational Psychology from University of Toronto, and a MLIS (Master of Library and Information Science) from the University of Western Ontario.

