Sources of Evidence-based Literature

Primary Resources – “Unfiltered”
These are large databases where unfiltered or primary studies and reports can be found. Examples are MEDLINE, EMBASE, CINAHL and the Cochrane Controlled Trials Registry. These databases index a wide range of publication types. They are considered “unfiltered” because the validity of evidence is determined by close examination by the individual researcher. The advantage of searching primary resources is in their size and scope. There is a high probability of finding some information on your question in one of these resources whereas the much smaller pre-filtered resources may not have the evidence you need. Primary resources are complex databases that require some skill and knowledge in order to search them efficiently.

Examples of Primary Publication Types Relevant to EBM are:
- Clinical Trial
  - All phases
  - Single Randomized Control Trials
  - Case Reports
  - Review Articles

- Epidemiology Studies
  - Prospective Studies
  - Retrospective Studies
  - Cohort Studies
  - Other Epidemiology Studies

Secondary Resources – “Pre-filtered”
These are comparatively smaller resources yet have higher levels of evidence. “Pre-filtered” resources are those where one or more expert has identified the value of a study or a group of studies and presented an analysis of the findings and clinical relevance. Sources of the primary literature have already been searched by researchers or study groups. These resources tend to employ a keyword or natural language search methodology, which makes them much easier to search than the controlled vocabulary/subject heading structured searching of MEDLINE and other large bibliographic databases. They tend to be small and take longer to produce than primary sources. Examples of Pre-filtered resources are Evidence-based Medicine Reviews (Ovid), Clinical Evidence, the Cochrane Library and the Turning Research Into Practice (TRIP) database. Note: Up To Date is not an evidence-based resource.

Examples of Secondary Publication Types Relevant to EBM are:
Considered Secondary when an Analysis is included in the Review
- Systematic Reviews
- Article Reviews
- Metanalysis
- Multicenter Studies