

Peer Review

## Review of: "Development and Functionality of the ABC Tool (Automated Boolean Composer) to Simplify and Standardize Search Strategy Construction in Bibliographic Databases"

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I found this paper fascinating and couldn't wait to try out the ABC Tool for myself. It's not often that you come across a new tool that challenges standard practice when it comes to search strategy design. Both experienced and novice searchers will find this a useful tool – experienced searchers will appreciate the opportunity to check that their own selection of search terms includes those the Tool considers relevant, while novice searchers will appreciate the time-saving and be reassured that the Tool is underpinned by a thorough process to identify a wide range of relevant terms (concepts, synonyms, spellings, etc.) for a given topic.

The paper is concisely and clearly written. The introduction neatly summarises the problems faced by systematic reviewers and others in crafting reliable search strategies and reporting them transparently. The inclusion of screenshots helpfully illustrates how the tool works.

A few comments and points to clarify:

- At the end of the Introduction, you mention that the tool allows users to insert terms into the advanced search interface of "a bibliographic database". I initially read this to mean any database, so perhaps consider saying "Epistemonikos databases" instead.
- You note that for some topics, a lower sensitivity threshold was used to maintain feasibility. Is this (or could this be) conveyed to users when they search a topic with a lower sensitivity threshold?
- Could you elaborate on how the tool integrates or could integrate controlled vocabularies like MeSH?

- I think it's worth emphasising that because the tool is designed for databases managed by the Epitemonikos Foundation (trials, syntheses), then the issue of creating standardised search strategies to locate specific study types (RCTs, SRs, etc.) is not relevant.

## **Declarations**

**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.