

**UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
CONSENT LETTER**

Testing a Random Item Screening Approach to Constructing Search Validation Sets

Dear Participant,

My name is Edwin Sperr and I am a faculty member at the Augusta University/University of Georgia Medical Partnership. I am inviting you to take part in a research study. I am looking for participants who have experience searching MEDLINE and evaluating the citations that are returned from a search.

A common task for searchers of bibliographic databases is search refinement – judging the effectiveness of an initial search strategy by examining the first page of two of results and then attempting to adjust search terms accordingly. This is not always a systematic process, nor is it necessarily a quick one, as the evaluation process has to be repeated with each iteration.

Those who develop search hedges and systematic review strategies often use a process where they measure how effective a given search is at retrieving items from a set of hand-selected “gold standard” articles. While this is a robust method, it is also resource-intensive. It also requires a searcher to have some citations already selected before she begins her search.

This project attempts to test the effectiveness of an approach whereby a searcher tests different iterations of a search strategy against a set of “known-good” citations in a streamlined way. A validation set of items is constructed by manually selecting a randomly-selected subset of search results, and then this validation is used to test each successive strategy. Larger subsets mean greater fidelity to the total search, but usability for the searcher suffers as the number of results they must screen increases. For this to be feasible, it is necessary to determine the minimum size where a random subset might represent the search as a whole.

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to visit a website. There you will be presented with a biomedical question (or questions) as well as a rubric for evaluating which MEDLINE citations might contain the answer to that question. Then you will evaluate a series of random MEDLINE citations and decide whether each citation matches that rubric. Once you complete this set of tasks, which should take no more than half an hour, your choices will be recorded. This will mark the end of your participation in the study.

Participation is absolutely voluntary, and a refusal to do so will not affect your grades or class standing. You can refuse to stop your participation at any time without penalty. If you do participate, your responses may help us understand how to streamline the process of refining complex bibliographic searches. Such an improvement could benefit those who commonly search bibliographic databases such as MEDLINE.

No privacy concerns are anticipated, as the data collected will be limited to basic demographic information as well as the lists of citations that you find suitable and unsuitable for your question. Research records will be labeled with study IDs that are linked to you by a separate list that includes your name. This list will be destroyed once we have finished collecting information from all participants. Please note that this research involves the transmission of data over the Internet. While every reasonable effort has been taken to ensure the effective use of available technology, confidentiality during online communication cannot be guaranteed.

It is possible that this information may be used or shared, after the identifiers have been removed, with other researchers and/or for future studies.

If you are interested in participating or have questions about this research, please feel free to contact me at 706-389-3864, esperr@uga.edu. If you have any complaints or questions about your rights as a research volunteer, contact the IRB at 706-542-3199 or by email at IRB@uga.edu.

Please keep this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

Edwin Sperr