Have you ever wanted to know the latest science on spinal cord injury or your specific complications?

Scientists and medical professionals summarize their research in articles that are reviewed by their peers and published in scientific journals, like Science or Nature.

SCI research is published in specific journals, including Spinal Cord, Archives of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, and the Journal of Neuroscience.

Here is a guide to how to keep up with what’s happening in SCI research, search for the research information you want, and retrieve research articles you’re most interested in.

**SEARCHING FOR THE RESEARCH INFORMATION YOU WANT**

Finding the research you’re looking for is like finding a specific book in your local public library. You wouldn’t try to find it by picking up the nearest novel on the first shelf you encounter or picking up a book with a similar title to the topic you want. The best way to find the book you want is to go straight to a searchable library database. Similarly, scientific journals are searched through free online journal article search engines. In fact, Google has its own science search engine called Google Scholar.

Science and medicine research article search engines:

> **PubMed (National Library of Science)**
This is the best known medical science search engine which allows very sophisticated layers of search and allows you to sign in, keep a clipboard of searches and article citations, and flags which articles are Open Access. [pubmed.gov](http://pubmed.gov)

> **Cochrane Database of Reviews**
When scientists are looking for a definitive answer on a particular area of medical science, such as a treatment approach, they conduct painstaking, methodical summaries of research articles and evaluate the strength of the evidence. Many systematic reviews are published by the Cochrane Collaboration. The Cochrane Database allows you to search for the summary you are looking for, and allows access to free summaries of their reviews. [cochrane.org/cochrane-reviews](http://cochrane.org/cochrane-reviews)

Reviews may also be published in medical journals, such as this list of reviews published in the journal Spinal Cord and can be found by searching medical journal search engines such as Google Scholar or PubMed. Just look for the word “Review” in the title or description. [nature.com/sc/archive/categ_rv_012015.html](http://nature.com/sc/archive/categ_rv_012015.html)

Peer review is the process used by publishers and editors of academic journals to ensure that the articles they publish meet the accepted standards of their discipline.

Peer review is the internationally accepted benchmark for ensuring quality and excellence in scientific research.

Most, but not all scholarly journals are peer reviewed.

One important thing to know: Research is a long process, and a single research article only speaks to a limited amount of data. Researchers and healthcare providers often require many studies and years of work in order to make decisions that change health care.

Don’t forget to discuss what you learn with your doctor before making any changes.
> Google Scholar
Google Scholar is very easy to use, but will often access duplicate articles or presentations, and doesn’t have as many options to let you narrow your search.

Once you’ve found the articles you are interested in, each search engine will offer you either a link to the full article (look for a link that says “Free Fulltext” or “Open Access”), or a short summary of the article and the article citation, including the article title, author names, publication date, and journal title, volume, issue, date and page numbers. If you want to read the full article and it isn’t openly available, jot down this information to help you find it later.

RETRIEVING THE ARTICLES YOU ARE INTERESTED IN

Journals are owned by publishers which charge access fees to read individual articles. Some publishers also allow Open Access articles, in which the researcher pays a fee up-front to make his or her article available, and some publications are designed to be Open Access, such as *PLOS ONE*, by the Public Library of Science. Increasingly, research funders such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH, in the United States) and the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR) have mandated or encouraged the Open Access publication of the results of all projects they fund.

However, most universities maintain hundreds of journal database subscriptions which allow their members access to the full text of the articles within. Here are some options to help you retrieve the articles you are interested in:

> University Libraries
Staff and Students of university libraries already have almost unlimited access to research publications both in-person and online. If you are not a staff or student, you may be able to access this from an on-campus library computer with the help of a university librarian.

Community Membership: Most libraries have Community Borrower cards which allow you to use some or all of the library resources. Check with the university library nearest you for more information.

**UBC Library**: Community borrower cards are available for a fee. Access to research journals may be restricted to on-campus libraries only.

[services.library.ubc.ca/borrowing-services/library-cards/unaffiliated/](services.library.ubc.ca/borrowing-services/library-cards/unaffiliated/)

UBC Library guide to finding research articles:

[help.library.ubc.ca/finding-resources/journal-articles/](help.library.ubc.ca/finding-resources/journal-articles/)

UBC librarians are also available using instant messaging through the library website if you need help online.

> Public Libraries
Most public libraries offer borrower cards for free and have access to the major scientific journals, however their selection may be smaller. The Vancouver Public Library has access to the main medical research journals. You can get a card in person at any branch, and do research on medical journals at home on the internet.

[guides.vpl.ca/health_information](guides.vpl.ca/health_information)

> Researchers
Many researchers are willing to share their articles by request. Find the corresponding author’s information under “Author Information” in the citation, and search for their email address online.

> Research Institutes and Patient Libraries
ICORD’s SCI Resource Centre volunteers are able to help visitors connect to research articles, so stop by the resource centre in the Blusson Spinal Cord Centre in Vancouver. Some hospitals and clinics have Patient and Family Libraries whose volunteers may be able to connect you to research articles upon request.

Once you have access to a large journal database, enter the journal name in the search bar and select the year, issue and volume that your article is in. Once you’ve found it, you will be able to select the specific article title you want.

Some university or public library computers will have their article databases integrated with their web browsers, so when you use Google Scholar or PubMed, you can choose the direct link to the article (usually displayed on the right side of the search result) which will activate the library’s own database.

If you need assistance, ask a librarian for a tutorial.