

# NWASLKS **Guide to information sources for Retracted journal articles**

## Knowledge for Life

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### Introduction

This guide to searching for retracted journal articles aims to help you avoid the problem of unknowingly including references to retracted journal articles in written work. Retracted journal articles are only a small area of the published literature. To give an idea of scale, less than 0.07% of [Biomed Central](#) output was retracted from 2000 - 2015 ([Moylan & Kowalczyk 2016](#)) or 1 in 10,000 journal articles ([Van der Vet & Nijveen 2016](#)). However, the number of Retractions has grown in the last decade.

### What is a Retraction?

Broadly, retraction is the withdrawal of an article from publication for whatever reason by the author or publisher. The reasons for the retraction are usually given in a *Retraction Notice*. This is published by the journal with the retracted journal article.

The most widely accepted definition is provided by Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) [Retraction Guidelines](#) 2009,

“ ... a mechanism for correcting the literature and alerting readers to publications that contain such seriously flawed or erroneous data that their findings and conclusions cannot be relied upon. Unreliable data may result from honest error or from research misconduct.”

### How are retracted journal articles identified?

Retracted journal articles are not withdrawn from publication. However, following the COPE [Retraction Guidelines](#) 2009, retracted journal articles should be clearly identified on the electronic version, and other versions such as print. They should also be identified in bibliographic databases. The following are examples:

PubMed [ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19633587> ]  
Retraction Notice [ <https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2017/206/1/retraction-notice> ]  
Retracted journal article [ <http://thejns.org/doi/abs/10.3171/2015.12.JNS151991> ]

### How does it effect you?

This effects you if you rely on a journal article in written work that you do not know has been retracted or if you cite a retracted article in your bibliography without indicating that you are aware it has been retracted. You might include retracted journal articles if you are writing about retracted publications as the subject/topic of your work or if you are using a retracted journal article for illustrative purposes clearly indicating that you know it is retracted in the text.

### Why are Retracted journal articles still being cited?

There is evidence ([Van der Vet & Nijveen 2016](#)) that retracted journal articles continue to be cited after they are retracted. Reasons include carelessness on the part of the authors and publishers failing to clearly identify retracted journal articles. It may also stem from a lack of information associated with the source of the journal article. For example, papers shared or taken from personal collections where they are not identified as retracted, or non-publisher versions of papers that are made available on the public web without the relevant Retraction information.

You are advised be to check with the publisher's website where you source the full text of a journal article from elsewhere. See also *Searching for Retracted Journal Articles*.

### Searching for Retracted Journal Articles

These examples use [NICE Evidence Search - HDAS](#). For single journal articles, you have the option to check the journal website or search for an article on PubMed, Medline or EMBASE to check its status.

When searching, the best search strategy is to combine the search for your topic with the appropriate thesaural terms for retraction. These terms are explained below. This requires you to search in specific fields. See the NICE Evidence Search Guide YouTube video on [In field searching](#). This may be blocked on some NHS Networks.

### Medline and PubMed

These terms are taken from the Medical Subject Headings [MeSH] can be used to search in the Publication Type or .pt field.

### Retracted Publication [[MeSH](#)]

“Work consisting of the designation of an article or book as retracted in whole or in part by an author(s). It identifies a citation previously published and now retracted through a formal issuance from the author or publisher.”

## Retraction of Publication [MeSH]

“Work consisting of a statement issued by one or more authors of an article or a book, withdrawing or disavowing acknowledgment of their participation in performing research or writing the results of their study. In indexing, the retraction is sent to the editor of the publication in which the article appeared and is published under the rubric "retraction" or in the form of a letter.”

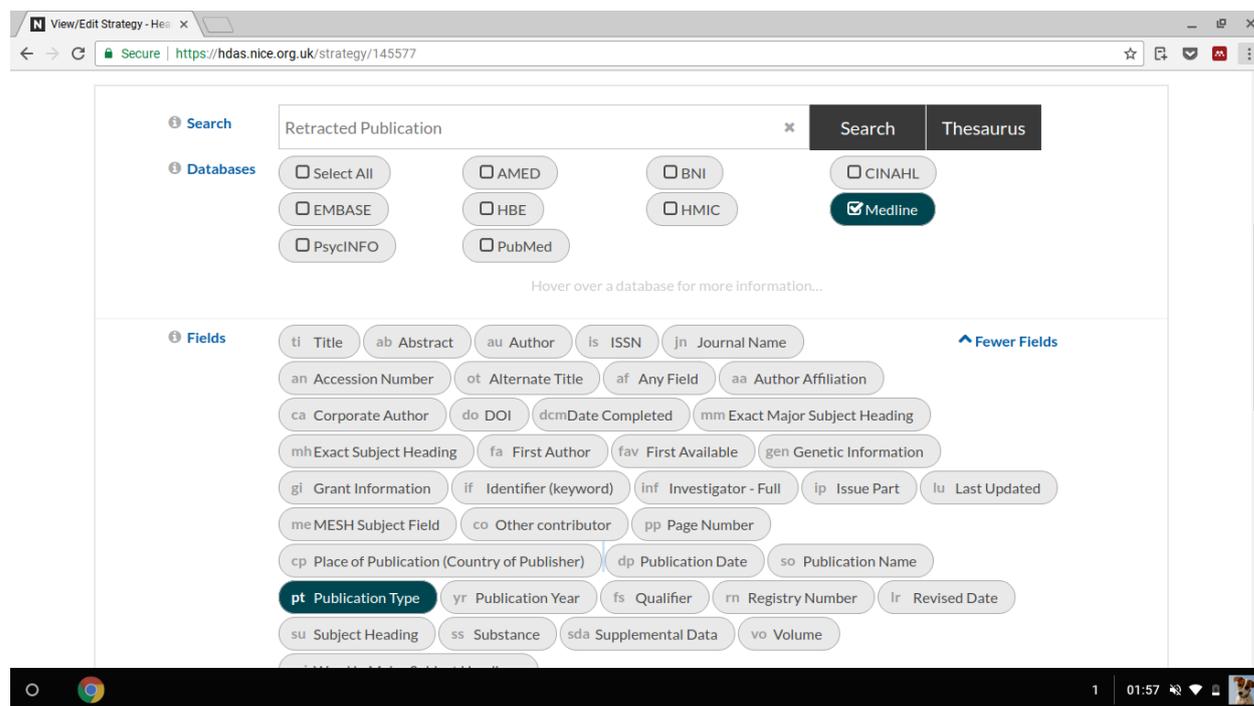
## Retraction of Publication as a topic [MeSH]

“Authors' withdrawal or disavowal of their participation in performing research or writing the results of their study.”

These terms can be implemented using a simple search statement. For example:

**retracted publication.pt**

or by selecting the **Publication Type** field from the menu:



## PubMed

PubMed uses a slightly different syntax. To search use [ ] to identify the Publication Type Field. For example:

**retracted publication[pt]**

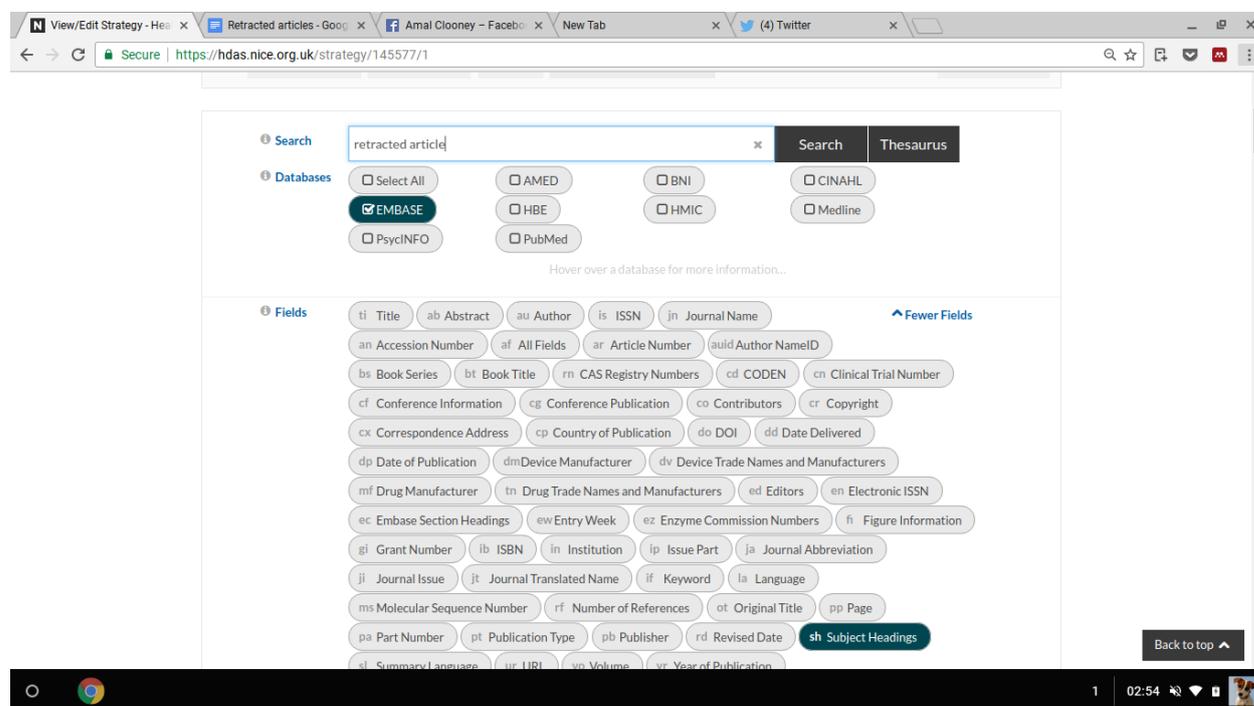
Follow this link to see a sample search [ [Retracted Publication](#) ].

## EMBASE

Using EMBASE use the Emtree term **Retracted Article** as a Subject Heading. This can be implemented using the statement

**retracted article.sh**

or by selecting **Subject Heading** field from the menu:



## Information Resources

The following are additional sources of information.

### Blogs

*Retraction Watch* provides an informed commentary on Retracted journal articles, their authors and publishers.

Retraction Watch [ <http://retractionwatch.com> ]

### Organisations

Organisations with a particular interest in publication and research integrity and usually referenced by publishers.

Cope on Publication Ethics - COPE [ <http://publicationethics.org> ]

International Committee of Medical Journal Editors - ICMJE [ <http://www.icmje.org> ]

UK Research Integrity Office [ <http://ukrio.org> ]

### Guidelines

The *Retraction Guidelines* issued by COPE (2009) set the standard for its members which includes most leading medical publishers.

COPE *Retraction Guidelines* 2009 [ [http://publicationethics.org/files/retraction%20guidelines\\_0.pdf](http://publicationethics.org/files/retraction%20guidelines_0.pdf) ]  
UKRIO *Guidance for researchers on retractions in academic journals* [ <http://ukrio.org/wp-content/uploads/UKRIO-Guidance-for-researchers-on-retractions-in-academic-journals.pdf> ]

### Publisher Guidelines

Typically, publishers reference the COPE *Retraction Guidelines* 2009. These are examples from major publishers:

Biomed - Editorial Policies - <https://www.biomedcentral.com/getpublished/editorial-policies#misconduct> ]  
BMJ - Correction and retraction policies [ <http://authors.bmj.com/post-submission-journey/correction-retraction-policies> ]  
Elsevier - Article Withdraw [ <https://getpocket.com/a/read/1197608404> ]  
Wolters Kluwer Publishing Ethics [ <http://wkauthorservices.editage.com/aboutus/wolters-kluwer-publishing-ethics.html> ]  
Wolters Kluwer - Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery [ <http://journals.lww.com/plasreconsurg/Pages/EditorialLegalEthicalPolicies.aspx#correctionandretractionpolicy> ]

### Guides

Scientific Publications: Retracted Publications and Related Topics. UMass Amhurst Libraries [ <http://guides.library.umass.edu/scientificpublication> ]

### References

Moylan, E.C. & Kowalczyk, M.K., 2016. Why articles are retracted: a retrospective cross-sectional study of retraction notices at BioMed Central. *BMJ Open*, 6(11). Available from: <http://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/6/11/e012047> [Accessed 26 February 2017].

Van der Vet, P.E. & Nijveen, H., 2016. Propagation of errors in citation networks: a study involving the entire citation network of a widely cited paper published in, and later retracted from, the journal *Nature*. *Research Integrity and Peer Review*. 1(3). Available from: <http://researchintegrityjournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s41073-016-0008-5> [Accessed 27 February 2017].

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