Potential Measure of Research Impact: Can You Propose a New MeSH Term?

By Chris Black, M.L.S.,
Assistant Director of Research Development Support, Office of Research

This is a series of tips published in UMMS Research News about writing proposals.

Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) is the National Library of Medicine's (NLM) controlled vocabulary thesaurus. It consists of descriptor terms in a hierarchical structure that permits searching at various levels of specificity.

MeSH is used by NLM for describing the content of articles from over 5,000 leading biomedical journals indexed in the MEDLINE®/PubMed® database, and for books and related materials used by NLM.

The staff members at NLM continually revise and update the MeSH vocabulary.

Some new descriptors that were added in 2013 include terms from "Accelerometry" to "Zonula Occludens-2 Protein."
In addition to receiving suggestions from indexers, the NLM staff collects new terms as they appear in the scientific literature or in emerging areas of research.

**Suggestions also are taken from researchers.**

An article on the Washington University Scholarly Communication blog asks: “Has your research resulted in a new term reflecting a new discovery, disease, process or concept? Or does your research expand upon an existing MeSH term? Is the term referred to in your journal articles or conference abstracts? Is the term being used by others?”

If so, consider submitting the term to NLM for consideration as an official MeSH term.

*For this and other articles related to scholarly work, see the Washington University Scholarly Communication blog.*

[View more information about MeSH.](#)