

PMID vs. PMCID: What's the difference?

NIH grant proposals, applications and reports are required to include the PubMed Central reference number (**PMCID**) for cited articles that have been archived in [PubMed Central](#) in compliance with the [NIH Public Access Policy](#) (mandatory compliance effective April 7). PubMed Central is a free, publicly-accessible full-text digital archive of biomedical and life sciences journal literature. All articles added to PubMed Central are assigned a unique identifier – a PMCID – that will need to be submitted to the NIH. Due to similar terminology, there is confusion over where to find the correct number.

When looking at citations in [PubMed](#), when displaying results in the “Summary” format, you see a PMID number, a unique identifier assigned to each article as it is added to PubMed. This is **NOT** the same number assigned to articles in PubMed Central, and will not meet the NIH guidelines.

The screenshot shows the PubMed website interface. The search bar contains the text "nih public access policy". The search results are displayed in "Summary" format. The first result is by Barnett MC, Keener MW, with PMID: 17971895. A red arrow points to the PMID number, and the text "Not this number!" is overlaid in red. The second result is by Humphreys BL, with PMID: 17641764. The interface includes navigation tabs for "All Databases", "PubMed", "Nucleotide", "Protein", "Genome", "Structure", "OMIM", "PMC", "Journals", and "Books". The search bar has "Go", "Clear", and "Save Search" buttons. The results area shows "All: 42" items and "Review: 8". The "Display" dropdown is set to "Summary", "Show" is 20, and "Sort By" is set to a default. The page number is 1 of 3.

To retrieve the PMCID number, you need to change the Display option to “Abstract,” “AbstractPlus” or “Citation.”

The screenshot shows the PubMed website interface with the search results for "nih public access policy". The "Display" dropdown menu is open, showing options: "Summary", "Abstract", "AbstractPlus", and "Citation". The "Abstract", "AbstractPlus", and "Citation" options are circled in red. The search results are displayed in "Summary" format. The first result is by Barnett MC, Keener MW, with PMID: 17971895. The second result is by Humphreys BL, with PMID: 17641764. The interface includes navigation tabs for "All Databases", "PubMed", "Nucleotide", "Protein", "Genome", "Structure", "OMIM", "PMC", "Journals", and "Books". The search bar has "Go", "Clear", and "Save Search" buttons. The results area shows "All: 42" items and "Review: 8". The "Display" dropdown is set to "Summary", "Show" is 20, and "Sort By" is set to a default. The page number is 1 of 3.

Once in the “Abstract” or “Citation” display, you will see the PMCID below the PMID beneath the citation. In the “AbstractPlus” display, you will see the PMCID to the lower right of the citation. This is the number to include on NIH proposals, applications and reports. For additional clarification, the PMCID is alpha-numeric, beginning with the abbreviation for PubMed Central, “PMC.”

The screenshot shows the PubMed interface. At the top, there's the NCBI logo and the PubMed logo with the text 'A service of the U.S. National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health'. Below that, there's a navigation bar with categories like 'All Databases', 'PubMed', 'Nucleotide', 'Protein', 'Genome', 'Structure', 'OMIM', 'PMC', 'Journals', and 'Books'. A search bar contains the text 'nih public access policy'. Below the search bar, there are buttons for 'Limits', 'Preview/Index', 'History', 'Clipboard*', and 'Details'. The display settings are set to 'AbstractPlus', 'Show 20', and 'Sort By'. The search results show 'Items 1 - 20 of 42'. The first result is '1: J Med Libr Assoc. 2007 Oct;95(4):450-3.' with a 'FREE full text article in PubMed Central' badge. The citation text is 'Expanding medical library support in response to the National Institutes of Health Public Access Policy.' by 'Barnett MC, Keener MW.' The PMID is 17971895 and the PMCID is PMC2000773. A green arrow points to the PMCID with the text 'Use this number!'.

Example citation with the PMCID:

Barnett, M.C., & Keener, M.W. (2007). Expanding medical library support in response to the National Institutes of Health Public Access Policy. *Journal of the Medical Library Association*, 95(4):450-453. PMCID: PMC2000773

PLEASE NOTE: Beginning May 25, if a publication has been submitted to PubMed Central but the PMCID is not yet available, NIH requests that grantees submit the NIH Manuscript Submission system reference number (**NIHMS ID**) instead. The NIHMS ID will be available to the individual who submitted the manuscript via the [NIH Manuscript Submission system](#). For tutorials on the NIHMS system, click [here](#). If publishing in a journal that submits the final published version to PubMed Central within 12 months of publication and the PMCID is not yet available, NIH requests that grantees use the phrase “**PMC Journal – In Process**” to indicate compliance.

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