

## 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and reports are required to include the PubMed Central reference number (**PMCID**) for cited articles that have been archived in [PubMed Central](#) in compliance with the [NIH Public Access Policy](#) (mandatory compliance effective April 7).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 results are paginated, showing "Page 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, similar to the previous one. The search bar contains the text "nih public access policy". The search results are displayed in "Summary" format. A red circle highlights the "Display" dropdown menu, which is currently set to "Summary". The dropdown menu options are "Abstract", "AbstractPlus", and "Citation". 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 results are paginated, showing "Page 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 a PubMed search result for the query "nih public access policy". The search results are displayed in "AbstractPlus" view. The citation is: 1: [J Med Libr Assoc](#). 2007 Oct;95(4):450-3. The PMID is 17971895 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]. 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.