

## **Abstract**

**Background:** EUROETHICS is a database covering European literature on ethics in medicine. It is produced within Eurethnet, a European information network on ethics in medicine and biotechnology.

**Objectives:** The aim of Euroethics is to disseminate information on European bioethical literature that may otherwise be difficult to find.

**Methods:** A collaboration model for pooling data from different centres was developed. The policy was to accomplish data uniformity, while still allowing for local differences in terms of software, indexing practices and resources.

Records contributed to the database follow common standards in terms of data fields and indexing terms. The indexing terms derive from two thesauri, Thesaurus Ethics in the Life Sciences (TELS) and Medical Subject Headings (MeSH). Combining elements from search tools developed previously, the developers sought to find a technical solution optimized for this data model. An approach relying on a thesaurus database that is loaded along with the bibliographic database is described.

**Results and conclusions:** The present case study offers examples of possible approaches to several tasks often encountered in database development, such as: merging data from diverse sources, getting the most out of indexing terms used in a database, and handling more than one thesaurus in the same system.