



Foundations • Educational evidence summary

Medication identity before medication scoring

This foundation article explains medication identity before medication scoring.

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Begin with the package, not the badge

A medication score is only as applicable as the identity match beneath it. Before asking what a value means, establish what medicine is actually being discussed. A familiar brand name, a shortened list entry or a spelling variant can point to more than one product context. Scoring the wrong record can produce a confident answer with an accurate number attached to the wrong exposure.

This guide describes an evidence-reading workflow. It does not adjudicate new medication identities or alter the directory. The goal is to help a reader follow the relationship between a medication name and the original source observation.

Step 1: identify the ingredient and product context

Use the active ingredient or ingredients as the starting point. Record the product's route and formulation when known. A combination medicine needs all its ingredients identified; it should not silently become a single-ingredient product because one component has a familiar name.

A brand is useful for locating the package, but the evidence may be indexed by a generic ingredient. Likewise, a salt or active-moiety label may require clarification. The correct response is to inspect the source and product information, not to assume that every similar label is interchangeable for every purpose.

Keep what is unknown visible. If only a partial name is available, the next useful question may be the ingredient or route. Inventing those details to complete a score creates more uncertainty than a brief clarification would resolve.

Step 2: compare the preferred name with the source label

UnifiedACB provides a preferred label for navigation and retains the source's original wording in each [public observation](#). The two fields serve different purposes. The preferred name helps group records for discovery. The original label lets the reader inspect what the publication actually described.



For example, the public benzotropine concept retains “Benzatropine” in the CALS observation and “Benzotropine” in the KABS supplement observation. The visible source labels make the grouping auditable. They should not be erased merely to make every row look identical.

Read any identity-status or formulation note with the same care as the score. A lexical grouping records a naming relationship; it should not be promoted into a claim that all pharmacokinetic, route or formulation details have been clinically adjudicated.

Step 3: keep combinations separate where the source does

A source may classify a named combination rather than each ingredient independently. The published classification belongs to that entry. Splitting it into component scores without a source-defined rule creates findings the publication did not provide.

The preserved [levodopa/decarboxylase inhibitor record](#) illustrates why exact wording matters. Its source label describes a combination context. Reading it as a universal score for every levodopa product or every decarboxylase inhibitor would broaden the source beyond the visible record.

The same caution applies in reverse. A score for one ingredient cannot automatically be applied to a multi-ingredient product as a whole. First determine whether the source addressed the combination and whether the intended interpretation requires separate component review.

Step 4: retain route and formulation qualifiers

A route-qualified statement is narrower than a whole-drug claim. Oral, topical, ophthalmic, inhaled, transdermal and injectable products can have different intended uses and exposure patterns. A source that specifies one of them should keep that qualification when quoted.

The [AGS criteria](#) provide examples of why route and dose information can change the applicable criterion. Such qualifications belong to the geriatric source; they do not authorize rewriting an ordinal scale entry. A correct identity workflow can show both pieces of evidence while preserving their different scopes.

Step 5: stop at an unresolved match

If the ingredient, formulation or source entry remains uncertain, report the uncertainty. Do not borrow a value from the nearest name or infer zero because a search did not return the expected label. A missing match and a published negative finding are different results.

For a correction request, include the exact source wording, publication or supplement, locator and proposed mapping. That creates a reviewable identity decision. A silent name substitution leaves later users unable to tell whether the source changed or the website reinterpreted it.

A final check before using Compare or Ask

- Confirm that each selected record represents the intended ingredient or explicit combination.



- Read source labels and route/formulation notes before comparing categories.
- Keep source versions attached to every numerical observation.
- State unresolved product details rather than completing them by guesswork.

Once identity is established, the score can be interpreted within its source. The order matters: evidence belongs to a record before it belongs in a comparison.

References

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Explore the evidence

[Ask UnifiedACB](#) about a medication or source, browse the [Medication Library](#), or read the [methodology](#).

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Educational evidence summary. This content does not provide patient-specific medical advice and does not replace clinical judgment, medication reconciliation, or prescribing guidance.