



The PICO Model

PICO can be used to help you develop your clinical question and formulate an appropriate strategy for researching your topic.

PICO stands for:

Patient or Problem

Who is the treatment/procedure being given to?
What is the condition or problem?
What are the most important characteristics/demographics?

Intervention

What treatment/procedure is being given?
What is happening to the patient/population?

Comparison

Which group will be used as a comparison (eg. same subjects over time, a control group – random, matched, historical etc.)?
How much better is this procedure than another?
What are the main alternatives to compare with the intervention?

Outcome

Health outcomes, satisfaction, costs, etc.
How is the effect of the intervention/exposure measured?

Example question:

In adults over 65 years old with coronary heart disease, is long term use of prophylactic drug X necessary to prevent reoccurrence of heart attacks?

Patient or **P**roblem coronary heart disease in adults over 65 years old

Intervention prophylactic drug X

Comparison

Outcome prevention of heart attacks



Search Planning Form

Use this form to plan your search by identifying the key concepts and scope of your research topic and to define its parameters.

1. Your research topic:

Briefly describe the key aspects of your topic in your own words.

2. Consider how the PICO questions relate to your research topic:

List keywords in each category.

P	I	C	O
Patient/Population	Intervention	Comparison	Outcome

Alternative Terms

List any

Search

synonyms for

keywords identified above.

3. Your research question:

Your research topic rephrased as a question, incorporating the elements identified in the PICO model (see example question on page 1).



4. Type of scenario:

- Diagnosis
- Therapy/prevention
- Prognosis
- Harm
- Etiology
- Other

5. Type of literature (i.e. publication type) to include in your search:

- Randomized controlled trial
- Meta analysis
- Systematic review
- Cohort
- Case control
- Cross-section
- Case series/report
- Other

6. Search restrictions/inclusion criteria, if any:

Anything that you might wish to exclude or ways that you might wish to limit your search.

- Gender
- Age
- Publication dates
- Language
- Other

7. List the databases most appropriate to your topic:

- Medline
- CINAHL
- EMBASE
- Cochrane
- ACP
- DARE
- Other