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 Problem** 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.*

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patient/Population</td>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
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**Alternative Terms**  
List any keywords identified above.

**Search**  
synonyms for

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