

PICO

The [Oxford Centre for Evidence Based Medicine](#) has excellent clinician-friendly resources on evidence-based practice.

Three short tutorials provide the clinician with a succinct guide to developing a clinical question using the PICO framework.

[Asking Focused Questions](#) provides tips for building each PICO element, and clinical examples.

[Finding the Evidence 1](#) guides the clinician through how to use PICO to formulate a search question when searching for research evidence.

[Finding the Evidence 2](#) shows the clinician how to convert a search question to a search strategy that will find research evidence relevant to his or her clinical question.

PICO can be adapted (including dropping some elements) depending on the clinical question being asked. The summary box presents ways that the PICO elements may vary according to the type of clinical question.

Question	Patient	Intervention	Comparison	Outcome (examples)
<i>Therapy (treatment)</i>	Patient's disease/condition	Treatment (e.g. medication, surgery)	Standard care, another intervention, placebo	Pain, disability, function, mortality rate
<i>Prevention</i>	Patient's risk factors and general health condition	Preventative measure	Another preventative measure OR may not be applicable	Disease incidence, number of days off work
<i>Diagnosis</i>	Specific disease/condition	Diagnostic test/procedure	Current "reference standard" or "gold standard" for that disease/condition	Measures of test utility (e.g. sensitivity, specificity, predictive value)
<i>Prognosis</i>	Duration and severity of main prognostic factor or clinical problem	Usually time or "watchful waiting"	Usually not applicable	Survival rates, mortality rates, rates of disease progression
<i>Etiology (cause)</i>	Patient's risk factors, current health disorders or general health condition	Intervention or exposure of interest (includes an indication of the strength/dose of the risk factor and duration of exposure)	Usually not applicable	Survival rates, mortality rates, rates of disease progression

Adapted from University of Canberra Evidence-Based Practice in Health: [Using the PICO Framework](#)