Using the PICO model to formulate a search question

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What is PICO?

- A useful model to help structure an answerable question
- Used to formulate clinical questions
- Breaks down the question into four key elements
The PICO model

- **Patient**, **Population**, **Problem**
- **Intervention**
- **Comparison**
- **Outcome**
Patient, Population, Problem

- Patient or patient group (gender, race, age)
- Disease or condition
- Stage of the illness
- Care setting
Intervention

- Type of treatment (drug, procedure, therapy)
- Intervention level (dosage, frequency)
- Stage of intervention (preventative, early, advanced)
- Delivery (who delivers the intervention? where?)
Comparison

• Alternative interventions (standard treatment, placebo, another intervention)

• There may not always be a comparison
Outcome

• The outcome or effects you are interested in, for example
  – Improvement of symptoms, healing
  – Side effects
  – Improved quality of life
  – Cost effectiveness and benefits for the service provider
Remember…

- Including more search terms will narrow your search
  - Use for very specific questions and larger databases to make number of results more manageable

- For a broader search, less specific details are needed
  - Use for broader questions and smaller databases which bring back fewer results
Identifying the key concepts

- **Example search scenario:**

  What evidence is there to support maggot therapy for the treatment of pressure ulcers rather than conventional debridement therapies?

- **Identify the concepts:**

  What evidence is there to support *maggot therapy* for the treatment of *pressure ulcers* rather than *conventional debridement therapies*?
Using the PICO model

- **P** Pressure ulcers (problem)
- **I** Maggot therapy (proposed intervention)
- **C** Conventional debridement therapies (comparative treatment)
- **O** Wound healing (outcome)
References

