PICO and PICo
Search strategy for quantitative and qualitative questions

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Topic analysis: What is the PICO method?

PICO is a method of putting together a search strategy that allows you to take a more evidence-based approach to your literature searching when you are searching databases like CINAHL and PubMed.

PICO stands for:

• Patient/Population - Who or what population
• Intervention - What are we doing to them
• Comparison - What is the alternative? (If any)
• Outcome - What is your desired outcome?
Clinical scenario: A pregnant woman with type 2 diabetes is concerned about the effect her current treatment may have on her pregnancy and unborn child. The GP has heard that insulin pump therapy may be a more successful treatment than conventional insulin therapy. However, the GP wants to get his facts right, so searches the literature. The question he wants to answer is:

Are insulin pumps more effective than conventional therapies in managing type 2 diabetes in pregnant women?

A PICO analysis of this would be:

- **Patient/Population**: Pregnant women with type 2 diabetes (and unborn child)
- **Intervention**: Insulin pump therapy
- **Comparison**: Conventional insulin therapy
- **Outcome**: Improved management of glucose levels

Note: you may have two aspects to your patient / population concept
However, you may also want to broaden your search by thinking about synonyms and other keywords or wording that you could use to make sure that you do not miss any important research. An extended PICO search strategy might look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main keyword</strong></td>
<td>Insulin pump therapy</td>
<td>Conventional insulin therapy</td>
<td>Improved management of glucose levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnant women and type 2 diabetes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Synonym</strong></td>
<td>Insulin infusion systems</td>
<td>Insulin injections</td>
<td>Successful pregnancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy and diabetes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Synonym</strong></td>
<td>Implantable infusion pumps</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When implementing the search, enter the search terms in the PICO order. It is likely that you will not need to enter all of the PICO strategy. You may find that you only need to search for the patient and the intervention.

http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/
Qualitative Questions -PICo

Qualitative and textual reviews: use **PICo** instead

P= Population
I= Phenomenon of interest
Co= Context

– Re-focus to **phenomenon of Interest**, not intervention,
– and **Context** not comparator

The phenomena of **Interest** relates to a defined event, activity, experience or process

**Context** is the setting
What are caregivers' experiences of providing home-based care to persons with HIV/AIDS in Africa?

Source: Aromataris 2012