Developing Your Search Strategy

This exercise is designed to help you develop a search strategy to use when looking for resources to answer a research or clinical question. Working in groups of 3-4 people, you will be asked to use one of the sample search questions provided.

1) What is your research question?

Putting your question into the PICO format can help clarify the question and break it down into its most important components. PICO stands for Patient, Intervention, Comparison, and Outcome.

2) Break your question down into the PICO format:

   Patient (P) =
   Intervention (I) =
   Comparison (C) =
   Outcome (O) =

3) List the main terms from your question that you want to use in your search. These are your keywords.

4) List additional keywords that may be useful. Consider alternative spellings, broader topics, research techniques, etc.
5) Using some of the tips we discussed (truncation, quotation marks, search connectors) combine some keywords to build a search statement. Remember to start out broad – don’t restrict your scope too much to start.

6) Think about what limits you can apply to your search results. Examples include publication date, study type, and language.