

Information Mastery Exercise

The goal of this exercise is to practice identifying and answering clinical questions that arise in practice by formulating an answerable question, using the secondary medical literature to answer this question, in a way that generates a useful solution that will improve the health of the patient.

Step 1. Identify a clinical question. The question can concern a treatment or a diagnosis

Step 2. Convert this question to one that can be searched by using the PICO format

Patient, Population or Problem

- What are the characteristics of the patient or population?
- What is the condition/disease you are interested in?

Intervention or exposure

- What do you want to do with this patient (e.g. treat, diagnose, observe)?

Comparison

- What is the alternative to the intervention (e.g. placebo, different drug, surgery)?

Outcome

- What are the relevant outcomes (e.g. morbidity, death, complications)?

See: <http://healthlinks.washington.edu/ebp/pico.html>

Step 3. Select one or more of the following resources to find the answer:

[Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews](#)

[ACP Physician's Information & Education Resource \(PIER\)](#)

[ACP Journal Club](#)

[DynaMed](#)

[BMJ Clinical Evidence](#)

[TRIP Database](#)

Links to all of these resources can be found on the databases page of the TUSM library.

Step 4. Determine the answer to your clinical question. What is the strength of your recommendation?

A “Strength of recommendation” is based on the quality of the available evidence and the degree to which the evidence has evaluated patient-oriented outcomes. Several of these resources offer a rating of the evidence quality and you will need to convert this ranking to a strength of recommendation. See: [Strength of recommendation taxonomy](#)

SOR = A consists of high quality evidence focused on patient-oriented outcomes

SOR = B consists of inconsistent or limited-quality evidence focused on patient-oriented outcomes

SOR = C Low quality evidence or evidence focused on disease-oriented outcomes or risk factors

Step 5. Apply the answer to the original patient situation.

From this exercise, develop a presentation (10 minutes) with the following slides:

1. The original clinical question
2. The PICO question
3. The method you used to search the resources (e.g., “I started with BMJ Clinical Evidence and then checked Dynamed)
4. What you found
5. From what you found, your conclusions, and the strength of your recommendation
6. What you did with the answer