

PICO: Forming a Clinical Question

Elements of the Clinical Question

A good clinical question will have four major elements considered: **Patient**, **Intervention**, **Comparison** and **Outcome**, commonly known as **PICO**.

Consider your clinical situation and fill in the boxes below.

Patient: A clinical question must identify a patient or patient group and include any information that is relevant to the treatment or diagnosis or the patient.

Intervention: The intervention is what you plan to do for your patient or patient group.

Comparison: In general most, but not all, clinical questions have a comparison. A comparison is the alternative that you want to compare to your intervention.

Outcome: The outcome is the hoped for effect of the intervention.

Now bring together the elements above into a clinical question:

Sample Case: A seven-year old male patient is found to have two cavities requiring fillings. His father asks if an electric toothbrush might help his son avoid cavities in the future.

A possible Question: In the case of a **seven-year old male** (Patient) is **a powered toothbrush** (Intervention) as effective as **a manual toothbrush** (Comparison) in **avoiding tooth decay** (Outcome)?

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