**Literature Search Planning**

Use this form to help identify and clarify key concepts and the scope of your topic. Turn over for guidance on each section.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. **Search Topic:** | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. **Consider how the following four categories apply to your topic:** | | | | | | | | | |
| **Patient/Problem** | | **Intervention** | | | **Comparison** | | | **Outcome/Effects** | |
|  | |  | | |  | | |  | |
|  | **AND** | |  | **AND** | |  | **AND** | |  |
|  | |  | | |  | | |  | |
| **OR** | | **OR** | | | **OR** | | | **OR** | |
| **Add synonyms, alternate spellings and acronyms** | | | | | | | | | |
|  | |  | | |  | | |  | |
| **3. Apply limits** | | | | | | | | | |
| Age range of patients?  Gender?  Study type? | | | | | Date of research?  Language?  Others? | | | | |

## How to use the form

1. Your search topic – briefly describe the key aspects of your topic

2. Consider how the following categories apply to your topic:

**Patient/Population and/or Problem** - the characteristics that define your patient, e.g. target clinical condition

**Intervention** - what you want to do with the patient/population/problem e.g. form of treatment, diagnostic test, type of service delivery.

**Comparison** (if applicable) – alternative(s) to main intervention, e.g. placebo, or a standard therapy

**Outcomes or effects** - any outcomes or effects relating to the intervention e.g. prevention, side effects, morbidity, quality of life, cost-effectiveness.

The Patient, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome (PICO) formula can be useful for planning a search, but it does not necessarily suit every question. In such cases, identify the individual keywords or phrases that define your search and place them in the boxes on the form, ignoring the PICO delineations.

Use the next part of the form to consider alternative keywords that could be used, taking into account:

* differences in terminology
  + Medline and Embase both index journals from around 70 different countries
  + old terms or new terms
  + medical terms or lay terms
  + brand name or generic name
* abbreviations (ten metre, 10 metre or 10m?)

3. Restrict the search by?

Information that will help to limit/focus your results:

* Is the patient’s age, gender or ethnicity relevant to your topic?
* How far back do you want to search, how relevant will 10 or 20 year old research be?
* Can you read papers written in other languages? Can you have them translated?
* What kind of evidence do you want? RCTs? Review articles? Case studies?

***Be aware that these kinds of limits can bias your search. Limiting to English language papers for instance, will exclude good quality research written in German, Japanese etc.***

## Example Search:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Search Topic:**  *Which methods of physiotherapy will help to recover function in an 85-year old stroke patient?* | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. **Consider how the following four categories apply to your topic:** | | | | | | | | | |
| **Patient/Problem** | | **Intervention** | | | **Comparison** | | | **Outcome/Effects** | |
| Stroke | | Physiotherapy | | | Not applicable | | | Recover function | |
|  | **AND** | |  | **AND** | |  | **AND** | |  |
|  | |  | | |  | | |  | |
| **OR** | | **OR** | | | **OR** | | | **OR** | |
| **Add synonyms, alternate spellings and acronyms** | | | | | | | | | |
| Cerebrovascular accident  OR  CVA | | Physical therapy | | |  | | | Functional recovery  OR  Recovery of function | |
| **3. Apply limits** | | | | | | | | | |
| Age range of patients? *Over 80*  Gender?  Study type? | | | | | Date of research? *Last 10 years*  Language? *English only*  Others? | | | | |

Adapted from the Literature Search Protocols: Recommendations for Researchers produced by the Thames Valley Health Libraries Network, 2005

## Literature Search Check List

We have gathered together the main resources that you will need on subject pages – see the Find section on the Health Library home page at [www.keele.ac.uk/healthlibrary](http://www.keele.ac.uk/healthlibrary)

Here you will find subject pages for:

* NHS Resources
* Midwifery and Nursing Databases (Keele)
* Medical Databases (Keele)

You should also check out the Internet resources we have listed on our Literature Searching page at <http://www.keele.ac.uk/healthlibrary/find/subjectlinks/literaturesearchingsites/>

Finally we have listed a range of Internet sources for a variety of subjects on our subject links pages at <http://www.keele.ac.uk/healthlibrary/find/subjectlinks/>

It is important that you consider carefully the type of resource that you need to use in order to identify the information that is going to be most relevant to your search topic.