What are the PICO components?

PICO: a mnemonic used to describe the four elements of a good clinical foreground question.

P	I	C	O
Population/Problem	Intervention (or cause, prognosis)	Comparison	Outcome
Describe as accurately and concisely as possible the patient/problem or group of patients of interest	What is the main intervention or therapy (or prognostic factor, diagnostic test, etiology, perception) you wish to consider?	Is there an alternative intervention or therapy to compare? Could be usual care, different test, etiology, etc.	What is the outcome?

PICO Pearls
1. PICO question drives your evidence search

2. PICO question is not an EBP project question

3. PICO questions are always written in past tense

4. Use terms that will be in the literature (no "local" terms e.g. soda, pop, cola)

5. Use PICO templates to get question formulated right

6. Do not use direction (increase/decrease) in PICO questions

7. Population/problem and outcome must match – the outcome addresses the population/problem

8. Do not change PICO question once start searching instead you change the keywords used in the search

9. You may teach as PICOT where the 'T' represents question type (e.g. intervention/therapy, prognosis/prediction, diagnosis or diagnostic test, etiology, or meaning)

Templates for formulating focused clinical questions using PICO method

Intervention/Therapy

In _____ (P), how does _____ (I) compared to
_____ (C) affect _____ (O)?

Prognosis/Prediction

In _____ (P), how does _____ (I) compared to _____ (C)
predict_____ (O)?

Diagnosis or Diagnostic Test

In _____ (P) are/is _____ (I) compared with
_____ (C) as good/more precise in diagnosing _____ (O)?

Etiology

Are_____ (P), who have _____ (I) compared with those without
_____ (C) at _____ risk for/of _____ (O)?

Meaning

How do _____ (P) with _____ (I) perceive/experience
_____ (O)?