



National Collaborating Centre
for Methods and Tools

Centre de collaboration nationale
des méthodes et outils

Webcast:

Part One: Define

Hi, I'm Donna Ciliska, Scientific Director of the National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools and a Professor at McMaster University. The National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools is funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada and located at McMaster University.

This session is about defining the question. It's the first part of the whole process of Evidence-Informed Public Health.

Evidence-Informed Public Health involves defining the question efficiently searching the literature; critically appraising the research that you find; synthesizing the information that you find to look what's the best evidence; adapting that evidence to your own local context, your own public health area; implementing the evidence with public health practitioners in the community; and then evaluating that implementation with the practitioners to see the impact on your community.

So, the first the step is defining the question – clearly defining the situation or problem that you're trying to fix.



Let's look at a couple of clinical examples that are recent for all of us: H1N1 was circulating in the community and we were looking at what could be done to curb the spread of this virus. In this scenario you'll be reporting to a management team and then to the media about what works.

Why does it matter that you take the time to clearly define the question? If you don't clearly define the question you can't be sure when you've found the answer.

So it really involves being clear so that you can do an efficient search.

In clearly defining the question, we're looking at this formulation called "PICO".

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PICO stands for:

- P - the population of interest;
- I - the intervention that you're curious about;
- C - the comparison; and
- O - the outcome of the intervention.

So, in our example about H1N1, the Population we're concerned about is anyone who's living in the community (H1N1 was impacting on everyone so there are no particular restrictions about age or type of person in the community).

The Intervention might be things like the use of masks or more frequent hand-washing.

The Comparison would be whatever our usual activity was before H1N1 was circulating in the community.

And of course the Outcome would be rates of respiratory viruses in the community.

So, now that you're ready to move on to your search, you can narrow down your search very much more when you're looking for these key terms.

If I could just go through quickly another example it would be perhaps with the H1N1 assessment clinics, where people were coming in with symptoms, so the P – the population of interest would be people attending these H1N1 clinics and the I might be the use of surgical masks; the Comparison would be not using masks for that group; and the Outcome would again look at the rates of spread of respiratory viruses in the community.

For more information and to follow along with the next steps of this evidence-informed public health process, you can visit our website at www.nccmt.ca for the English or www.ccnmo.ca for the French version.

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