Asking answerable questions

Ambuj Kumar, MD, MPH
Associate Professor, Director
Center for Evidence Based Medicine, Dept of Internal Medicine, College of Medicine, University of South Florida
Tampa, Florida USA
Fundamentals of Evidence generation

Ask

Hierarchy of evidence

Principles of evidence-based practice

Acquire

Appraise

Apply

Act & Assess

Patient dilemma

Evidence alone does not decide – combine with other knowledge and values

Courtesy: Dr. Richardson

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How I feel today?

1. Happy
2. Very Happy
3. Ecstatic
4. OK
5. Why I am here?
Which study design provides most unbiased answers on question related to efficacy competing treatments

1. Cohort study
2. Cross-sectional study
3. Case series
4. Randomized controlled trial
Which study design provides most unbiased answers on question related to diagnostic accuracy of compared tests?

1. Cohort study
2. Cross-sectional study
3. Case series
4. Randomized controlled trial
Which study design provides most unbiased answers on question related to prognosis?

1. Cohort study
2. Cross-sectional study
3. Case series
4. Randomized controlled trial
Which study design provides most unbiased answers on question related to harms?

1. Cohort study
2. Case series
3. Randomized controlled trial
4. De-challenge-re-challenge study
5. All the above
Navigating the study design maze

- **Q1. What was the aim of the study?**
  - To simply describe a population (PO questions) descriptive
  - To quantify the relationship between factors analytic.

- **Q2. If analytic, was the intervention randomly allocated?**
  - Yes? RCT
  - No? Observational study

- For observational studies the main types will then depend on the timing of the measurement of outcome, so our third question is:

- **Q3. When were the outcomes determined?**
  - Some time after the exposure or intervention? cohort study (‘prospective study’)
  - At the same time as the exposure or intervention? cross sectional study or survey
  - Before the exposure was determined? case-control study (‘retrospective study’ based on recall of the exposure)
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Hierarchy of evidence

Evidence alone does not decide – combine with other knowledge and values

Courtesy: Dr. Richardson
20 - 3 \times 5 =

1. 85
2. 5
We’ll peer into …

- Identifying the model to create a well-built question
- Have some fun reviewing clinical scenarios and building questions!
What Pushes Us … ?

Toward
- curiosity
- Prove colleagues wrong
- Keeps coming up
- Risk of patient harm
- Want to do better
- Anxiety
- Avoid litigation
- Internet informed patient

Away
- Time
- We already know the answer
- Fatigue
- Access
- Inferiority complex-anxiety-afraid of admitting knowledge gaps
- Cynical
- Laziness
- Lack of support
- Previous failure at searching
- Lack of resources
- No one else does it
- Fear of change

Courtesy: Dr. Richardson

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How does it feel … ?
To know an answer?

To NOT know an answer?
# Emotions in Not Knowing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ready to …</th>
<th>Feeling</th>
<th>Behaviors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flee</td>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>Leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Invisible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fight</td>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>Disrupt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Undermine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cry for help</td>
<td>Distress</td>
<td>Stop trying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Body stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdraw</td>
<td>Sadness</td>
<td>Inattention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Detachment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Courtesy: Dr. Richardson
Emotions in Knowing

- **Satisfaction**: Self image of “knower” meets reality of “knew this”
- **Curiosity**: the wind in the sails
- **Joy**: knowing and/or learning brings benefits to others
- **“Zero gravity” or “flow”**: when learning engages the mind fully without self consciousness
Source of questions

- Majority deal with Diagnosis and Therapy
  - 50% on Therapy
  - 25% diagnosis

- Survey of ambulatory clerkship
  - 97% of questions covered these 2 domains

*J Gen Intern Med.* 2001; 16:244–249
Do the questions get answered?

- Study evaluating family physicians
  - about 3.2 questions for every 10 patients seen.
  - questions pursued only one third of the time
  - less than 2 minutes devoted to finding each answer
  - useful information found 80% of the time

*BMJ. 2002;324:1–7*
Primary barrier

- Difficulty with the question format.
  - question often vague
  - open to interpretation
Pay attention

- Put yourself in this situation
- Listen to the presentation
- Listen to the "inner thoughts" of this learner listening to the presentation
Clinical Scenario
‘Hoot Groups’ Task

- Groups of 2
- **Describe:**
  - Questions that can arise from this case
- **Write it down**
- **Be ready to report in 3 minutes**
What you noticed?
‘Background’ and ‘Foreground’ Questions

- **Background question**
  - general knowledge or “facts” (questions often starting with who, what, when, why, which)

- **General questions about**
  - Conditions
  - Illnesses
  - Syndromes/patterns of disease
  - pathophysiology

- **2 components:**
  a. Root* + Verb: “What causes …”
  b. Condition: “… High BP?”
‘Background’ and ‘Foreground’ Questions

- **Foreground questions**
  - About patient care decisions and actions
  - Relationships between a patient and condition
  - Exposure (therapeutic, diagnostic) and an outcome.
  - Generally very detailed
    - Best answered with the information contained in published research studies
Background and Foreground Questions
Background vs Foreground Questions

What Causes gastroenteritis?

1. Background
2. Foreground
Background vs Foreground Questions

Is oral rehydration as effective as IV rehydration?

1. Background
2. Foreground
Background vs Foreground Questions

How to tell if patient is dehydrated?

1. Background
2. Foreground
Background vs Foreground Questions

What are the symptoms of otitis media?

1. Background
2. Foreground
Background vs Foreground Questions

Can I effectively treat otitis media with a shorter course of antibiotics?

1. Background
2. Foreground
Formulating a well-built focused clinical question
The anatomy of a focused question

HEAD

ARMS

LEGs
**PICO (T.S) Model for Clinical Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Patient, Population or Problem</td>
<td>How would I describe a group of patients similar to mine?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Intervention, Prognostic factor, or Exposure</td>
<td>Which main intervention, prognostic factor, or exposure am I considering?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Comparison to Intervention (if appropriate)</td>
<td>What is the alternative?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Outcome you would like to achieve or measure</td>
<td>What can I hope to accomplish?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>What type of question are you asking</td>
<td>What is the action domain (Treatment, diagnosis, prognosis, harm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Type of study you want to find</td>
<td>What would be the best study design?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Remember ............

- **Limits of PICO (TS)**
  - Not all components applicable all the time
  - Pico is a model not a rigid structure
Clinical Scenario #1

- On morning rounds in the Hem/Onc unit, a first year resident turns to you for consultation. She wants to discuss options for managing moderate nausea and vomiting that result following chemotherapy. She shares an experience a relative had taking ginger when prochlorperazine didn’t provide effective relief and asks for your input.
‘Hoot Groups’ Task

- Groups of 2
- Discuss
  - What is your clinical question in PICO format?
  - What type of clinical question is this?
  - What is the best study design to answer that clinical question?
- Write it down
- Be ready to report to group
- Return in 2 minutes
An answerable clinical question

P Patients receiving chemotherapy experiencing nausea & vomiting
I Ginger
C Prochlorperazine
O Reduction in nausea & vomiting
T Therapy/Treatment
S RCT/Systematic review of RCTs
Question

In patients receiving chemotherapy who are experiencing moderate nausea and vomiting is the use of ginger as effective as prochlorperazine in reducing nausea and vomiting?
Clinical scenario #2

Traditionally, clinicians have used a conservative approach to the diagnostic evaluation of head-injured infants, arguing that infants are at increased risk of intracranial injury (ICI) and that symptoms or signs of brain injury may not be reliably present in those with ICI. A number of previous studies have reported that a significant fraction of ICIs in infants occur in patients with a normal neurological status and with no signs or symptoms of brain injury. You want to see how well clinical features predict ICI in infants.

- What is your clinical question in PICO format?
- What type of clinical question is this?
- What is the best study design to answer this type of clinical question?
An answerable clinical question

- **P**: Children with head injury
- **I**: CT Scan
- **C**: Clinical findings
- **O**: Diagnosis of intracranial hemorrhage
- **T**: Diagnosis
- **S**: Cross-sectional study/Systematic review of cross-sectional studies
Question

Among children with minor head injury does the use of CT scan versus other clinical findings affect identification and diagnosis of intracranial hemorrhage?
Clinical scenario #3

A 2-year-old patient presents with a 12-month history of recurrent wheezing, cough, dyspnea, and mucopurulent nasal discharge. There are no smokers in the household, and all pets have been removed. Antibiotics and antihistamines have been tried without sustained benefit. Physical examination demonstrates normal growth and normal vital signs. Thick yellow nasal discharge is noted, and bilateral expiratory wheezes are heard on chest auscultation.
‘Hoot Groups’ Task

- Groups of 2
- Discuss
  - What is your clinical question in PICO format?
  - What type of clinical question is this?
  - What is the best study design to answer that clinical question?
- Write it down
- Be ready to report to group
- Return in 2 minutes
An answerable clinical question

P Toddlers with nasal discharge
I Antibiotics
C -
O Probability of recurrence
T Prognosis
S Cohort study/Systematic review of cohort studies
Among toddlers with recurrent nasal discharge does the use of antibiotics affect the probability of recurrence?
Clinical scenario #4

Working on the Developmental Assessment Team for school-aged children of mothers who used cocaine during their pregnancy, you are interested in learning the developmental outcomes for these children as they begin school compared to children not exposed to cocaine during pregnancy.

- What is your clinical question in PICO format?
- What type of clinical question is this?
- What is the best study design to answer this type of clinical question?
An answerable clinical question

**P** Otherwise healthy children

**I** Exposure in utero to cocaine

**C** Children not exposed to cocaine

**O** Increased incidence of learning disabilities

**T** Harm/Etiology

**S** Cohort or case-control study/Systematic review of cohort/case-control studies
Question

Do otherwise healthy children (controlling for confounding factors) exposed in utero to cocaine, compared to children not exposed to cocaine have increased incidence of learning disabilities?
FAQ: Why Bother? 1

- Relevant to clinical needs
- Relevant to learning needs
- Plan searches
- Recognize answers
- Awaken curiosity
- In teaching, improve comprehension
- In referral, improve communication
- Have some fun!

Any evidence?

Courtesy: Dr. Richardson
FAQ: Why Bother? 2

**RCT:** ↑ explicitness of questions

*Villaneuva et al BMC MI/DM 2001; 1: 4.*

**RCT:** ↑ frequency of searches

*Cabell et al JGIM 2001; 16: 838.*

**Before-After Trial:** ↑ precision of search

*Booth et al Bull MLA 2000; 88: 239.*

**RCT:** ↑ quality of search, evidence found

FAQ: How Long ... ?

- Proficient? Quickly
- Mastery? Lifetime

- Human expertise takes >10,000 hours, >10 years

→ Deliberate practice

Courtesy: Dr. Richardson
Questions: Take ‘Em Home

- Believe Q’s rule
- Q’s are chances to learn and to use evidence
- Recognize Q’s
  - Background
  - Foreground
- Select Q wisely
  - Match to Resources
Thank you

Questions?

akumar1@health.usf.edu
813-396-9194
MDC 3122