have an explicit description of how all the important factors were integrated into the formulation of the recommendations. (In subsequent articles in this series, we will describe in more detail the factors to consider for all types of resources.) Second, the resource should be both comprehensive yet specific enough to cover the question of interest. Other factors that also are relevant to consider are that the resource should be up to date (that is, clinicians should rely on the most recent evidence), and that it should be available to the practitioner who wants to use it.

A variety of resources is available for free and open to the public. However, many valuable resources (for example, the full text of the most recent journal articles or systematic reviews) are not available to nonsubscribers. Health care professionals may take advantage of subscriptions held by their institutions.

Regardless of the level of processing and summary involved, all evidence should be used with caution. The clinician should be able to differentiate evidence that inspires confidence from evidence that does not. In subsequent articles, we will provide guidance for this critical appraisal.

TRANSLATING THE QUESTION INTO SEARCH TERMS

The PICO framework not only helps in clarifying the question, but also facilitates the translation of the question into terms that are used in the search. Depending on the resource in hand, and on how broad or narrow the search, search strategies will range from simple to complex (Table 3). In large databases such as PubMed, it is possible to use filters such as Clinical Queries (www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/clinical) to conduct more specific searches, and to take advantage of tools such as “Related Citations” to find additional relevant material.

An efficient search also will depend on the clinician’s familiarity with the topic and experience in searching. Exploring these resources before using them in practice often proves useful.

CONCLUSION

Knowing how to formulate structured clinical questions and to search for the best current evidence to inform a clinical decision are vital skills for the practice of EBD. Familiarity with the many types of resources that have been developed to facilitate efficient searching is fundamental requirement for EBD practice.

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