# PICOT Worksheet for Nursing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P</th>
<th><strong>Population.</strong> Describe your population (e.g. age, sex, medical condition, care setting, problem). If you have choices (e.g. either the patient or the patient’s family), you can list both and choose one later based on results of your lit search. The Outcome MUST match/affect the Population.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td><strong>Intervention or issue.</strong> Describe the therapy, treatment, or other intervention being considered, or describe the issue to investigate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C (optional)</td>
<td><strong>Comparison.</strong> If there is one, identify the alternative to the Intervention. If the alternative is “not doing the Intervention”, you can leave it unstated.</td>
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<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td><strong>Outcome.</strong> Describe the desired outcome of the intervention. It MUST be measurable and it MUST match/affect your Population. For example, “feeling better” would not be a measurable outcome. You can only have ONE Outcome in your PICOT. It’s ok to list several possible Outcomes here, and choose one later based on your lit search.</td>
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<tr>
<td>T (optional)</td>
<td><strong>Timeframe.</strong> If a specific time period is relevant for your question, note the period over which population is observed or outcome is measured. Note that many PICO questions do not include time.</td>
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What type of clinical question do you have?

Scanning question templates/examples can help you decide what type of question you have and how to frame it. When you’re ready, you can choose the best match for your topic and fill out the template.¹

- **Intervention question:** what treatment has the best outcome?
  - *e.g.* In immobile older adults (P), how do repositioning sheets (I) compared with slider sheets (C) affect the integrity of their skin (O) within a six month period (T)?
  
    In __________________(P), how does __________________(I) compared with ____________(C) affect ____________(O) over ___________(T period of time)?

- **Etiology question:** what are the greatest risk factors or causes?
  - *e.g.* Are pregnant women (P) who have drug addictions (I) at greater risk for postpartum depression (O)?
  
    Are __________________(P), who have __________________(I) compared with those without __________________(C), at ____ risk for _____(O) over ________(T period of time)?

- **Diagnosis question:** what test is most accurate and precise?
  - *e.g.* In adults over 65 years in residential care (P), is the confusion assessment method (I) compared with intensive care delirium screening checklist (C) more accurate in diagnosing delirium (O)?
  
    In __________________(P), is/are __________________(I) compared with ____________(C) more accurate in diagnosing ____________(O) ?

- **Prognosis question:** what is the course/likely complications of a condition?
  - *e.g.* In men over 65 with prostate cancer (P), how does surgery (I) compared with radiation (C) influence survival rates (O) over five years (T)?
  
    In __________________(P), how does __________________(I) compared with ____________(C) influence ____________(O) over __________(T period of time)?

- **Meaning question:** what is the meaning of an experience for an individual or group?
  - *e.g.* How do nursing staff (P) working in residential care facilities (I) feel about aggressive behaviour of residents with dementia (O)?
  
    How do __________________(P), with __________________(I) perceive ____________(O) during _________(T period of time)?

What is a PICOT question NOT?

- **Not a best/better question**
  - *In population P, what is the best treatment for X?*
  - *In population P, is treatment X better than treatment Y?*

- **Not answered by a yes/no/number**
  - *Will population P who get treatment X see an improvement in outcome O?*
  - *In population P, by what percentage will treatment X improve outcome O?*

- **Not a prediction or a thesis statement**
  - *I will prove that population P who have intervention I compared to intervention C will have improved outcome O.*

- **Not an open question**
  - *In population P, what are the barriers to outcome O?*
  - *In population P, what is the effect of treatment X compared with treatment Y?*