

Editorial



Using PICO (T) approach in Evidence Based Practice in Nursing

Nursing practice is guided by research in almost similar way as it is guided by nursing process. One important thing that separates research from nursing process is that research gives the nursing practice a solid ground to base upon i.e the evidence. Evidence based solutions can originate with the practicing nurses who discover a clinical problem in the course of every day practice, or by nursing administrators searching for a solution to a problem affecting wider area of clinical practice. The six steps in using evidence in practice are: problem identification, evidence collection, appraisal of collected evidence, selection and implementation of evidence, outcome evaluation, and outcome dissemination.

PICOT approach was suggested by Melnyk and Fineout-Overholt (2011) for use of evidence in nursing practice. This approach calls for five parts to be identified when framing a clinical question.

PICOT : The Population, the Intervention (or interest), the Comparison of intervention, the Outcome, and the Time frame.

“P” in PICOT stands for population. Specific population that needs a change in a certain clinical practice is identified first. The population may be age specific such as children or adults, male or female. Population may be of those suffering with a particular disease such as diabetes whether admitted in the hospital or those residing in a particular geographic area. “I” here stands for a particular intervention or a wider area of interest. Such as, you may be planning to replace the routine practice of insulin injection with the use of syringe (for self administration of insulin by insulin dependent patients) to using the prefilled insulin pen injector because of it being convenient and not requiring elaborate procedure. Now, this may require exploration of literature concerning availability, cost, acceptability affordability before taking a decision to replace the said clinical procedure. “C” in PICOT denotes the comparison. This can be an alternate intervention or validating the existing intervention. The above example of teaching the patient the new way of self-administration of insulin by pen injector or reinforcing the earlier taught procedure of routine insulin injection with the use of syringe and needle. You need to find the evidence in the literature. “O” in PICO(T) stands for outcome or the consequences of the applied intervention. With the same example given above, suppose we taught a group of patients who were willing to adopt the new convenient procedure of insulin injection and asked their opinion as to how they found it with regard to convenience, accuracy, pain and discomfort experienced and the cost. We may also do a comparison with their previous experience of insulin injection using syringe and needle.

“T” in PICO(T), stands for time frame. The time may not be applicable in every clinical situation such as in the example given above. Time will be applicable in situations where an intervention is given for a specific time period or repeated after a specific period, such as, hand washing for 30 seconds, SP-6 acupressure for pain relief in

dysmenorrhea for 10 minutes repeated every 4-6 hours or as the case may be.

PICO(T) approach helps nurses to focus on and define the clinical problem they want to address. However, the most important part of EBP is to collect evidence to the clinical question we need to address. First we must check out the National Guidelines data base if available for your selected clinical question. NABH has prepared some protocols for nursing procedures. If there are no guidelines or systemic reviews or if the ones you find were not published within the last 10 years, you will then proceed to search for individual research articles for evidence on the clinical question. CINAHL and MEDLINE have comprehensive database for clinical questions in nursing. PICO(T) approach guide you to decide on parameters to use for search. This approach provides you with key words /terms for search, such as to limit your search to specific population.

Further steps to appraising the evidence, implement the selected and agreed upon evidence and evaluating the outcome will be done for EBP in clinical practice in nursing. However, in this article we have tried to show the use of PICO (T) approach in deciding upon the identification and defining the clinical problem that needs an evidence based solution.

References:

1. Melnyk, B and Fineout-Overout. 2011. Evidence-based practice in nursing and health care. New York, NY: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
2. Langford, R and Young, A. 2013. Making A Difference with Nursing Research. PEARSON: New York

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