



## FINDING THE EVIDENCE PLANNING YOUR SEARCH

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Clinicians are faced with the need to make decisions concerning the best intervention to choose when treating their patients. In seeking information, whether for diagnosis, screening, prognosis, therapy, risk factors or preventative actions, clinicians need to be able to search for, and critically review, research findings to obtain supporting evidence for the best practice. Clinicians can then use this information as a basis for decisions about patient care and treatment.

This chapter describes the process of planning a search to find systematic reviews. These steps can also be used to find the information required to undertake a systematic review. A systematic review as described by Straus, Richardson, Glasziou, & Haynes (2005) "is a summary of the medical literature that uses explicit methods to systematically search, critically appraise, and synthesize the world literature on a specific issue" (pp. 147-148). Khan, Kunz, Kleijnen, & Antes (2003, p. 7) list five steps of a systematic review. This chapter concentrates on the first of these steps, that is, framing questions for a review. Chapter 3 concentrates on the second step, identifying the relevant literature.

Formulating a clear clinical question of a patient's problem is often difficult to do. Think carefully about the issue and the words that can be used to describe the problem. Time spent preparing for the search will ultimately save time and make the search more effective. The following steps take readers through the search process, and can be used to undertake a search on any question in any database.