Health Research the PICO Way

**P:** Problem or Patient or Population (a condition of interest)

**I:** Intervention (e.g. a treatment, procedure, diagnostic test, drug therapy, monitoring)

**C:** Comparison (e.g. another intervention may be “nothing” or a placebo or specific treatment)

**O:** Outcome (could be positive, e.g. improvement of condition/disease/patient, or negative, e.g. adverse effects from treatment or therapy)

**Example:** Complementary medicine is more and more frequently being incorporated into “standard” treatment protocols. You’ve heard that your local hospital and several long term care facilities near you are “employing” service animals and/or allowing patients to be visited by “pets” (e.g. birds, dogs, cats) during the course of their inpatient treatment. You can think of several pros and cons related to this idea and want to find some evidence-based medical literature that shows why some facilities have added this type of therapy. You want to know if hospital patients benefit from animal-assisted therapy.

**PICO question:** Do inpatients (P) exposed to therapeutic animals (pets) (I) experience decreased psychosocial and physical adverse effects of hospitalization (O) than inpatients not exposed to pets (C)?

**Possible CINAHL search strategy:**

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((MH "Pet Therapy") OR (MH "Service Animals")) AND (MH "Inpatients") AND (benefit* OR benefic*)
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Limited to: English Language; Peer Reviewed; Publication Type: Research
Sample search form based on the PICO model. The major areas are modeled not only after PICO but also are crafted to resemble the refinements available in CINAHL (CINAHL headings, subheadings and limits) or other Medical databases with controlled vocabulary like PubMed and Medline.

### Evidence-Based Practice an Interprofessional Tutorial

<https://www.lib.umn.edu/apps/instruction/ebp/>  
An evidence-based practice tutorial from the University Of Minnesota Health Sciences Libraries. Step 1 contains excellent examples of formulating PICO questions.