Two Types of Clinical Questions

When beginning to explore your topic, you will need make sure that you ask a clear focused question. In order to insure that you do this well, you will need to answer two types of questions. Depending on the question the types of resources you will consult will vary because the purpose of each question varies.

Background Questions: Focuses on the big picture and provides basic, general knowledge in reference to a specific condition, situation or topic.

- Provides general information that enables one to gain a greater understanding and allows one to understand the options or possibilities when it comes to addressing a topic.
- Tend to have two components.
  - A question root (who, what, when, etc.) with a verb
  - A disorder, test, treatment, or other aspect of healthcare

Background Question Resources: Reference Books, Textbooks, Review Articles

Examples:

What is the best practice for preventing nosocomial infections?

What types of patients are most at risk for falls in the inpatient setting?

What are the best interventions to encourage sleep in the inpatient setting?

When is the best time to discuss end of life care decisions with terminal patients?

Foreground Questions: focused question that asks something specific in order to make an informed clinical decision or action.

- Specific knowledge about managing a patient with a condition.
- Requires a grasp of basic concepts
- Foreground Question Resources - Research findings, journal articles, conference proceedings, synthesis of findings
  - Primary Research / Evidence Summaries / Translational Literature
- Question can be broken down into parts into parts - PICO
P - (Patient, Population or Problem)

I - (Intervention)

C - (Comparison with other treatments, if applicable)

O - (Outcome)

Examples:

*Is therapeutic touch or guided imagery more effective when treating a patient with fibromyalgia?*

*In elderly patients requiring wound care, does the use of tap water as compared to normal saline reduce the incidence of infection?*