A systematic search of the literature requires coordination among group members. Though individuals can do independent searches, everyone should work with the same PICOT, keywords/subject headings and limiters. This process should help identify the ‘best available evidence’ for your project.

**Step 1**

Clinical problem/drafted PICOT: ________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________

What keywords and subject headings (CINAHL or MeSH) will/did individuals use in their preliminary searches?

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____________________________________________________________

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What limiters will/did individuals use in their preliminary searches? (Date range, language, or any other limiting criteria used)

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____________________________________________________________
What databases/resources will be searched? (And who will search them?)

________________________(_______) , ______________________(_______) , ______________________(_______)  
________________________(_______) , ______________________(_______) , ______________________(_______)  
________________________(_______) , ______________________(_______) , ______________________(_______)  

Step 2
Regroup after an initial search of the literature is done.  
Evaluate the evidence that was located.  Discuss the most useful keywords/subject headings used in preliminary searches.

List any new keywords and/or subject headings identified during preliminary searches:

________________________     ____________________________     ____________________________
________________________     ____________________________     ____________________________
________________________     ____________________________     ____________________________

List the keywords and subject headings that didn’t work well.  This will help so you won’t waste time using those terms later in the process:

________________________     ____________________________     ____________________________
________________________     ____________________________     ____________________________
________________________     ____________________________     ____________________________
Step 3
Discuss and possibly refine your PICOT question…

Refined PICOT: ____________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

As a group, decide which keywords and subject headings should be used for future searches.

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As a group, decide which limiters should be used for future searches.

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

Now organize the keywords, MeSH subject headings, or CINAHL subject headings into one or two specific searches:
If it helps, circle the Boolean Operators – and, or, not - used and the Qualification – title, abstract, subject, etc. - options used.
Search Option 1:

________________________OR__________________________OR________________________ IN________________ (Title/Abstract/Subject/or Other Field Used)

AND/OR

________________________OR__________________________OR________________________ IN________________ (Title/Abstract/Subject/or Other Field Used)

AND/OR

________________________OR__________________________OR________________________ IN________________ (Title/Abstract/Subject/or Other Field Used)

**************************************** Search Option 2: ****************************************

________________________OR__________________________OR________________________ IN________________ (Title/Abstract/Subject/or Other Field Used)

AND/OR

________________________OR__________________________OR________________________ IN________________ (Title/Abstract/Subject/or Other Field Used)

AND/OR

________________________OR__________________________OR________________________ IN________________ (Title/Abstract/Subject/or Other Field Used)

As a group run both searches in at least two resources. As a group, compare the search results from the two searches. Which results are most relevant and appropriate? Is one of the searches better than the other? Do additional words need to be added? Do words need to be excluded from the search?
**Step 4**

Once the standardized search is selected, split up into individual or small teams and run the final search in the databases/resources selected by the group.

**Final Search**

\[
\text{__________________________OR __________________________OR __________________________ IN __________________ (Title/Abstract/Subject/ or Other Field Used)}
\]

\[
\text{AND/OR}
\]

\[
\text{__________________________OR __________________________OR __________________________ IN __________________ (Title/Abstract/Subject/ or Other Field Used)}
\]

\[
\text{AND/OR}
\]

\[
\text{__________________________OR __________________________OR __________________________ IN __________________ (Title/Abstract/Subject/ or Other Field Used)}
\]

**What databases/resources will be searched? (And who will search them?)**

\[
\text{__________________________ (________), __________________________ (________), __________________________ (_______)}
\]

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\text{__________________________ (________), __________________________ (________), __________________________ (_______)}
\]

\[
\text{__________________________ (________), __________________________ (________), __________________________ (_______)}
\]
**Step 5**
Document the databases/resources searched by group members and (the number of results/articles) identified:

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______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Keep in mind that there will be an overlap among the abstracts/articles you find in the different databases. Don’t be overwhelmed – carefully review the title/abstracts of your search results to determine which full-text to retrieve, read, and appraise. Not all of the articles you retrieve will probably be used in your analysis – your critical appraisal of the full-text will determine if the information should be included or not.

**Jot down reasons why articles will not be used in final analysis. Also jot down reasons why articles will be used in the final analysis.**
Use complete sentences to explain why articles/documents weren’t “the best available evidence”. Do not need a reason for every individual article or document – can generalize based on exclusion/inclusion criteria. Relevance to PICOT? Population studied? Sample size? Currency? Quality of research?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
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______________________________________________________________________________
Document the databases/resources searched and the (number of articles/documents from that resource) included in the group’s final evidence analysis:

________________________________________( # used ), ____________________________________(# used ), ____________________________________(# of used ),

________________________________________( # used ), ____________________________________(# used ), ____________________________________(# of used ),

________________________________________( # used ), ____________________________________(# used ), ____________________________________(# of used ),

________________________________________( # used ), ____________________________________(# used ), ____________________________________(# of used ),

Reflections on systematic search process:
Jot down what was learned during this systematic search process. Were there difficulties/obstacles? What lessons were learned that will be applied to future searches for evidence?

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Congratulations! You have completed a systematic search for evidence.
Don’t forget that your group will need to type this process up in a narrative format and submit it as your Research Log with your Summary Grid. Turn this worksheet in with the narrative Research Log and Summary Grid.