Clinical Resources: an Introduction

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The Basics

- Make sure you understand the basic facts (background) about a topic before trying to answer more complex questions.

- As you build on your clinical knowledge, you’ll have fewer background questions because you’ll know more.
Question Types: A Short Review

- Background questions are factual (*What is dengue fever?*) and often multi-faceted (*How is it contracted? Where is it prevalent?*)
- Textbooks are great for background questions; you’ll find overviews of health conditions, physiology, pathology, and epidemiological information.
- Research databases, such as PubMed, are also useful, but may require setting *Limits.*
Questions: A Short Review

- Patient-centered (foreground) questions pertain to a specific patient/case, lab test, therapeutic intervention or exposure.

- The **PICO** (Patient, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome) mnemonic helps you structure your clinical questions in an answerable format.
Categorizing Clinical Resources

- Many and diverse information resources are necessary for high quality patient care.
- Thinking of resources in terms of general categories helps to differentiate them, which improves practitioner efficiency.
- Common categories:
  - filtered/unfiltered information
  - subject coverage
  - information type or format
- But don’t get too hung up on categories! Most resources fall into more than one.
Filtered (Secondary) Resources

- Definition: any resource other than the original study or data set.
- Examples:
  - Textbooks (eBooks, print)
  - ClinicalKey (filtered and unfiltered information)
  - UpToDate
  - Natural Medicines
  - National Clearinghouse Guidelines
  - Cochrane Library (systematic reviews)
Use Filtered Resources For:

- Topics with a large body of research and consensus on treatment;
- General or factual information;
- Overviews of a medical conditions and treatment options.
Unfiltered (Primary) Resources

- Offer mostly original studies and data.
- Don’t summarize, grade, or appraise the studies/data. (You do that yourself.)
- Require advanced search skills for efficient retrieval.

Examples:
  - PubMed
  - Embase
  - CINAHL
  - AMED
Use Primary Resources For:

- Topics with a small body of research.
- New or cutting edge treatments.
- CAM research (evidence base is often small).
- Independence: you don’t want to rely on someone else’s opinion; you question the secondary research and want to critically evaluate the studies yourself.
Categorizing Resources: By Subject

- **Natural Medicines** – botanical monographs; CAM therapeutics; graded research evaluations
- **Cochrane Library** – systematic reviews.
- **Embase** – RCTs, natural product and pharmaceutical research; East Asian medicine
- **AMED** – international CAM research; indexes about 500 journals
Categorizing Resources: Type of Tool

- **Calculators**: see list on *Clinical Portal*
- **DDx**: *Dynamed, UpToDate, AccessMedicine, ClinicalKey, BMJ Best Practice*
- **Drug/Herb/Food/Lab Test Interactions**:  
  - *Natural Medicines*
  - *Interactions Guide*
Conclusion

- Naturopathic medicine emphasizes individual difference—practitioners need the skills to individualize patient-related research in order to provide the highest quality care.
- Familiarity with different types of clinical resources, good PubMed skills, and the ability to evaluate research studies are a great place to start.