Selecting a General Topic

Chapter 2

2.1 Practical Questions

- Questions derived from <u>clinical practice</u>, <u>community observations</u>, and <u>personal experience</u> often point toward an unmet demand for needs assessments, program evaluations, and clinical effectiveness studies.

- A good research question ends in a question mark and is <u>testable</u>.

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2.2 Brainstorming & Concept Mapping

- Use *brainstorming* to create a long list of possible research topics.

- Use *concept mapping* to identify central themes that might be worth exploring.

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FIGURE 2-1   Brainstorming Questions

Area	Questions
Values	• What are my interests and personal values? • What research topics are personally meaningful? • Have some understudied conditions that I could explore significantly affected me, my family, my friends, or my patients/clients? • Have certain health issues sparked my passion because they reflect what I consider to be an injustice?
Skills	• What knowledge and skills do I already have?
Personal growth	• What new skills do I want to develop?
Connections	• What source populations and/or data sources might be available to me through professors, supervisors, colleagues, and other personal and professional contacts?
Job and/or course requirements	• What does my supervisor or professor want me to study?
Gaps in the literature	• What information is not currently available that would make a contribution to the discipline and/ or to improving health practices or policies?

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2.3 Keywords

- Use the **MeSH database** (<u>Me</u>dical <u>S</u>ubject <u>H</u>eadings) to identify related ideas and to expand or narrow a theme.

- The MeSH dictionary is available from PubMed.org.

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2.4 Exposure, Disease, Population (EDP)

- The "EDPs" form the basis for many research questions:
  "Is [exposure] related to [disease/outcome] in [population]?"

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FIGURE 2-2   Examples of Types of Exposures

Socioeconomic Status	Health-Related Behaviors	Health Status	Environmental Exposures
• Income	• Dietary practices	• Nutritional status	• Drinking water
• Wealth	• Exercise habits	• Immune status	• Pollution
• Educational level	• Alcohol use	• Genetics	• Radiation
• Occupation	• Tobacco use	• Stress	• Noise
• Age	• Sexual practices	• Anatomy and anatomical defects	• Altitude
• Sex/gender	• Contraceptive use	• Reproductive history	• Humidity
• Race/ethnicity	• Hygiene practices	• Comorbidities (existing health problems)	• Season
• Nationality	• Religious practices		• Natural disasters
• Immigration status	• Use of health care services		• Population density
• Marital status			• Travel

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FIGURE 2-3   **Examples of Types of Diseases**

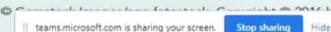| Infectious and Parasitic Diseases	Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs)	Neuropsychiatric Disorders	Injuries
• Candidiasis • Cholera • *Escherichia coli* • Hookworm • Malaria • Syphilis • Tuberculosis	• Asthma • Breast cancer • Cataracts • Diabetes • Hypertension • Osteoporosis • Stroke	• Alzheimer's disease and other dementias • Autism • Depressive disorders • Posttraumatic stress disorder • Schizophrenia	• Bone fractures • Burns • Crush injuries • Frostbite • Gunshot wounds • Near drownings • Poisonings

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FIGURE 2-4   Examples of Types of Populations

- Australian children younger than 5 years old
- Women living in rural Ontario
- Adults with diabetes
- Teachers with at least 10 years of classroom experience
- Individuals newly diagnosed with influenza at St. Mary's Hospital in Newcastle
- Nongovernmental organizations working on issues related to HIV/AIDS in Uganda

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2.5 PICOT

- "PICOT" is often used for clinical research
  - *Patient/Population*
  - *Intervention*
  - *Comparison*
  - *Outcome*
  - *Timeframe*

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