

Examples of Good and Bad CER Questions for PCORI Funding Using the PICOTS Framework

Bad Examples

Question:

“In patients with recurrent furunculosis, do prophylactic antibiotics, compared to no treatment, reduce the recurrence rate?”

What’s wrong? This CER Question does not include a timeframe or a setting. Also, PCORI only funds CER questions that compare two proven interventions. It does not fund studies where the comparator is “no treatment”.

Question:

“For mothers of children with a fever, what are the principal concerns?”

What’s wrong? First of all, the population is too broadly defined. In addition, the question is missing a timeframe, setting, comparator and intervention.

Question:

“In African-American female adolescents with hepatitis B, how does acetaminophen compared to a placebo affect liver function?”

What’s wrong? This CER question does not include a timeframe or setting. In addition, PCORI will not fund studies that use a placebo as a comparator.

Good Examples

Question:

“In older adults of varying risk (P) working in factories (S), is exercise and balance (I) more effective than clinical treatments (C) in preventing falls (O) over the course of a year? (T)”

Rationale: Not only does this meet all aspects of the PICOTS framework, it also compares two proven methods and is a priority research topic from the Institute of Medicine.

Question:

“Is robotic assistance knee surgery (I) more effective than conventional knee surgery (C) in achieving mobility (O) for middle aged men (P) in rural communities (S) during the first six months following surgery? (T)”

Rationale: Not only does this meet all aspects of the PICOTS framework, it also compares two proven methods and is a priority research topic from the Institute of Medicine.