

South African Initiative for Systematic Reviews on Health Policies and Systems

Below are some prompts to help you think through asking your question as clearly as possible so that it might be answerable in a systematic review research format

- Does the question relate to **how big a problem is** (e.g. the prevalence of a risk factor or condition, limited access to a service, or the under- or over-utilisation of a service)? If so, it is necessary to clarify the settings or populations of interest and the outcomes of interest (e.g. the risk factor, condition, access or utilisation)
- Does the question relate to **the causes of a problem** (e.g. why there is a high prevalence of a condition or why a service is not accessible)? If so, it is necessary to clarify the settings or populations of interest, exposures (the likely causes of the problem) and the outcomes of interest
- Does the question entail **identifying options to address a problem** (e.g. what the options are for improving the delivery of an effective clinical intervention or what the options are for improving access to a service)? If so, it is necessary to clarify the settings or populations of interest, the range or types of interventions of interest (and any specific interventions of interest), and the outcomes of interest (including desired outcomes and any particular concerns about adverse effects or resource utilisation). What are the primary (most important) outcomes of interest and what are secondary outcomes?
- Is the question about **the effects of a specific option** (or options) (e.g. how effective is a specific programme or service, or what are the advantages and disadvantages of a change in who delivers a service or where it is delivered)? If so, it is necessary to clarify the settings or populations of interest, the specific interventions of interest (including what is currently being done), and the outcomes of interest (including desired outcomes and any specific concerns about adverse effects or resource utilisation). What are the primary (most important) outcomes of interest and what are the secondary outcomes?
- Is the question about **barriers to change** (e.g. the reasons why an intervention is not being delivered, or the challenges of implementing a health system change)? If so, it is necessary to clarify the settings or populations of interest, any specific potential barriers or facilitators of interest, and the outcomes of interest (i.e. the desired change and any particular concerns about adverse effects or resource utilisation)
- Does the question entail **identifying implementation strategies to address a problem** (e.g. what are the options for increasing the utilisation of a service, improving the adherence of health workers to guidelines, or changing a health system arrangement)? If so, it is necessary to clarify the settings or populations of interest, the range or types of interventions of interest (and any specific interventions of interest), and the outcomes of interest (including the desired change and any particular concerns about the adverse effects or resource utilisation). What are the primary (most important) outcomes of interest and what are secondary outcomes?
- Is the question about **the effects of a specific implementation strategy** (or strategies) (e.g. how to increase the utilisation of a service, how to improve health workers' adherence to a guideline, or how to change a health system arrangement)? If so, it is necessary to clarify the settings or

populations of interest, the specific interventions of interest (including what is currently being done), and the outcomes of interest (including desired changes and any specific concerns about adverse effects or resource utilisation). What are the primary (most important) outcomes of interest and what are secondary outcomes?

- Is the question about **monitoring or evaluation** (e.g. how to monitor or evaluate the implementation of a health system change)? If so, it is necessary to clarify the settings or populations of interest, the specific interventions of interest (including what these are being compared to – for example, what is currently being done), and the outcomes of interest (including the desired outcomes and any specific concerns about adverse effects or resource utilisation). What are the primary (most important) outcomes of interest and what are the secondary outcomes?

Acknowledgement: We thank Andy Oxman for kindly sharing the questions used in the SURE Rapid Response Guide. This Guide is available at: <http://www.who.int/evidence/sure/rapidresponses/en/>