As clinicians, you will want to use information with the strongest evidence in making decisions about the care of your patients. Following are some tips that will help you feel confident in finding and using this evidence.

This module provides a good definition of Evidence-Based Medicine as it applies to the clinical setting as well as information about PICO, a mnemonic that can assist in crafting a search for Best Evidence.
Many misunderstand Evidence-Based Medicine by thinking that it is only comprised of utilizing research and outcomes data or that it is “cookbook” medicine. It is important to understand that Evidence-Based Medicine is combining these outcomes with clinical experience and needs of a specific patient. A new drug with strong outcome data to support its use is of no good to a patient that cannot afford to fill the prescription.
PubMed includes over 22 million citations. This is just one of the resources available for finding good evidence. To make finding information easier, think of these four elements of a search. Who is the patient? Adult? Elderly? American? Having co-morbidities? Not all patients are the same and as a result, not all outcomes from all studies can apply across the board. What is the intervention? What is the therapy or diagnosis that a question is about? What is the Control? Placebo? Another drug or gold standard therapy? What is the desired outcome? See the Disease-Oriented Outcome versus Patient-Oriented Outcome to better understand “lowering cardiac risk” as an outcome over “lowering blood pressure.”
PICO Example

PICO

P=A 55 year old male with history of childhood chicken pox.
I=Zostavax vaccine
C=No vaccine
O=Reduced risk of Herpes Zoster (Shingles)

SEARCHABLE QUESTION

In a 55 year old male with a history of childhood Varicella/Chicken Pox, will immunization with the Zostavax vaccine reduce his risk of developing Herpes Zoster/Shingles?

When learning to effectively find good evidence in the literature, it is often helpful to write out a PICO and Searchable Question before beginning a search. Eventually, thinking PICO will come naturally.