

# FOCUSING THE QUESTION

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# Aims for this session



- .. Overview of question types in qualitative systematic reviewing
- .. Formulating a qualitative question: a worked example
- .. Over to you!

# Importance of a focused question

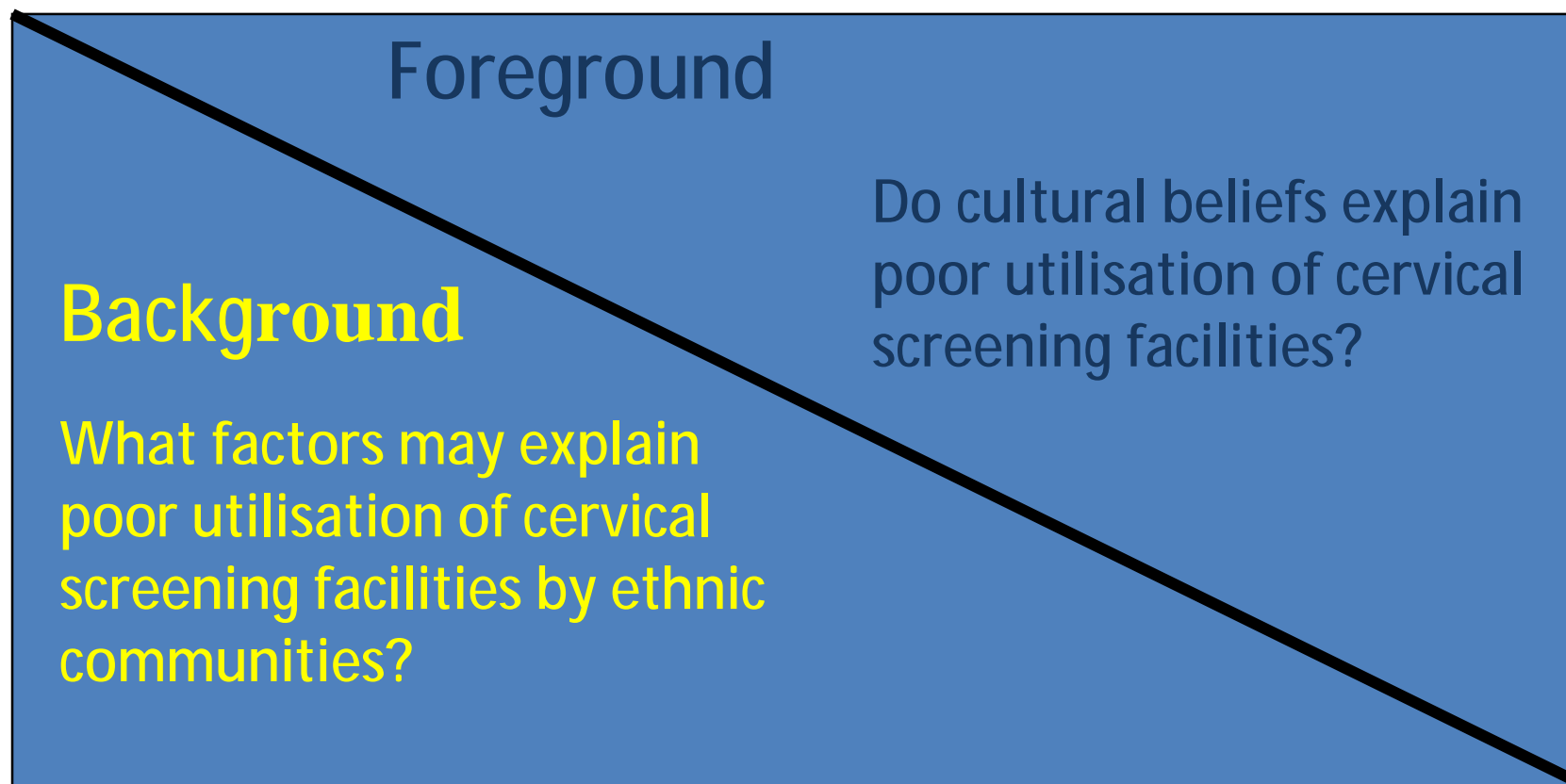
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- .. “The review question should specify the types of **p**opulation (participants), types of **i**nterventions (and **c**omparisons), and the types of **o**utcomes that are of interest... These components of the question, with the additional specification of types of **s**tudy that will be included, form the basis of the pre-specified eligibility criteria for the review”.  
(Cochrane Handbook)

# Different types of qualitative questions

- .. What is the aim of the question?
  - ⌘ Background question: to inform development of a quantitative effectiveness protocol
  - ⌘ Informing or supplementing question: To help explain the findings of an effectiveness review by
    - n using qualitative data from included trials and/or
    - n identifying qualitative studies (sibling studies) alongside included trials and/or
    - n Identifying qualitative studies that explore the intervention
  - ⌘ To enhance an effectiveness review by
    - n Finding qualitative studies that enable conceptual analysis of issues raised about the topic

# Background and foreground questions



Source: McKibbin A, Hunt D, Richardson WS et al. Finding the evidence. In: User's guide to the medical literature. 2002; 13-15

# Using background questions in protocol development

- .. What factors may explain poor utilisation of cervical screening facilities by ethnic communities?
  - ✧ Produces a list of factors for example
    - n Socioeconomic group
    - n Level of education
    - n Ethnicity
    - n Prior screening experiences
  - ✧ These factors may be taken into account in terms of formulating the PICO for the effectiveness review

# Informing development of the PICO for an effectiveness review protocol

- .. P: Women aged 45 or over
- .. I: Written invitation to cervical screening
- .. C: Written invitation plus follow up reminder
- .. O: Attendance at screening

Do these factors, identified from a qualitative background search, affect the formulation of the question?

- Socioeconomic group
- Level of education
- Ethnicity
- Prior screening experiences

# Informing questions

- .. P: Do women aged 45 or over perceive
  - .. I: A written invitation to cervical screening as more or less appropriate than
  - .. C: A written invitation plus follow up reminder
  - .. O: In terms of influencing their decision to attend for screening
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- .. Qualitative data from randomised trials explores acceptability of written invitations
  - .. A qualitative study of patient satisfaction with the cervical screening service is conducted alongside the trial
  - .. Qualitative studies exploring patient satisfaction with cervical screening are located for the similar populations (P), interventions (I)



# A structure for formulated questions



Cochrane Reviews use **PATIENT-INTERVENTION-COMPARISON-OUTCOME** (PICO) structure

Within qualitative evidence syntheses the following may be more appropriate:

**SETTING**

**PERSPECTIVE**

**INTERVENTION/INTEREST**

**COMPARISON**

**EVALUATION**

# Let us consider SPICE

<b>S</b>	<b>Setting</b> – Where? In what context?
<b>P</b>	<b>Perspective</b> – For who?
<b>I</b>	<b>Intervention (Phenomenon of <i>Interest</i>)</b> – What?
<b>C</b>	<b>Comparison</b> – What else?
<b>E</b>	<b>Evaluation</b> – How well? What result?

# Enhancing questions

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- .. Issues raised in the randomised controlled trials may include
  - ✧ Low uptake of screening that appears to be related to ethnic group and level of education
- .. Qualitative questions may be formulated to explore these questions
- .. What would your questions be?

# What is qualitative research?

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- .. Methods that explore experiences, perceptions, views
- .. A research process that uses a qualitative method of data collection and a qualitative method of analysis
- .. Thinking feeling describing – not measured
- .. The product is common themes and concepts that help to interpret and understand phenomenon - explanatory

# Summary

- .. An open ended, exploratory Background Question can provide:
  - ✧ Clarity on the Scope of the Question for an effectiveness review protocol
  - ✧ Criterion for developing Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria
  - ✧ Starting point for Development of Search Strategy
- .. Informing questions are
  - ✧ Usually closely aligned to the PICO for an effectiveness review
  - ✧ Aim to identify qualitative research that was conducted alongside RCTs or is closely related to the PICO for the RCTs included in the review
- .. Enhancing questions are
  - ✧ open questions that explore specific issues that arise from or may be relevant to the included studies in an effectiveness review.
  - ✧ Helpful for explaining effects/results of the effectiveness review.