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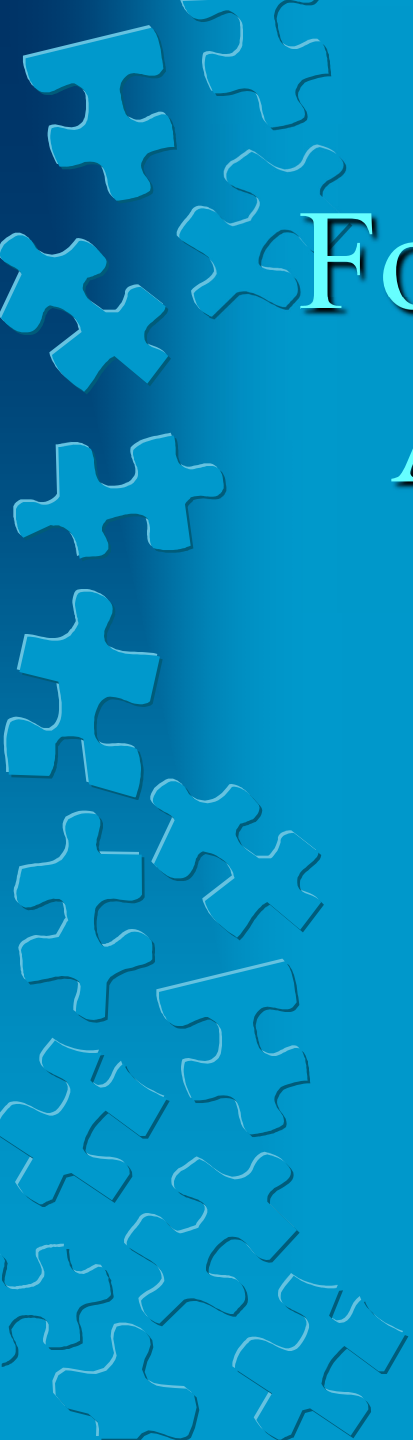
MPH

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MPH Principles of Public Health: PowerPoint: Formulating Questions

Jonathan Eldredge

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Formulating & Refining Answerable Research Questions

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University of New Mexico

MPH Principles of Public Health

File: MPH Principles Session One Question Formulation

Thursday August 27, 2015. 5:30-7:00pm Med 2 Classroom

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Opening Question

Why do you think that formulating answerable questions will be important for your individual MPH degree education and for your career? (Handout)

1.

2.




The Handout



Realistic Scenario

- You are walking around your community, trying to think of a Principles of Public Health research project
- You overhear discussions among groups of:
 - Teenagers
 - Elderly
- Both groups are discussing the problems related to their diabetes



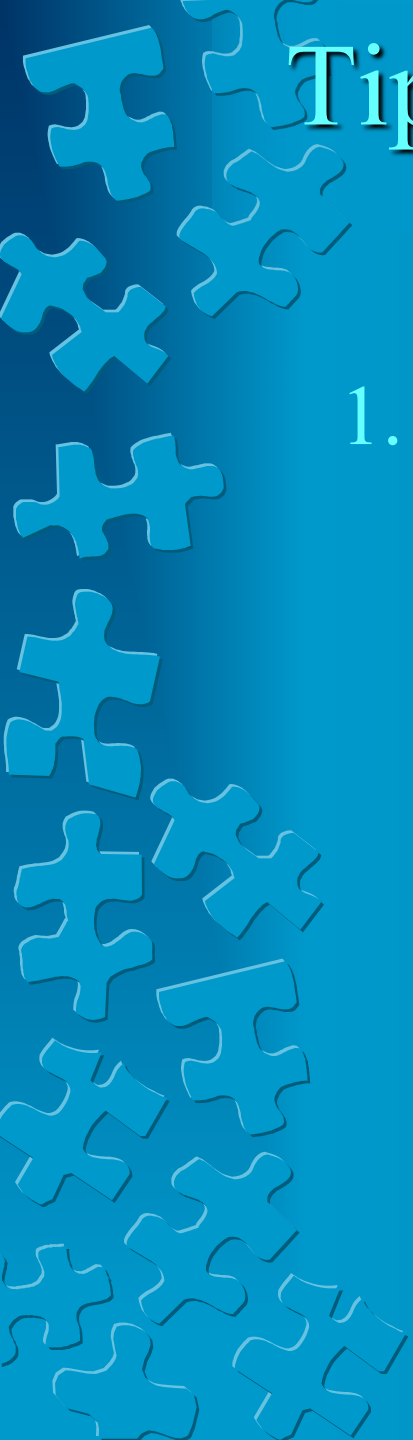
Tips for Formulating Answerable Questions

1. .

2. .

3. .

4. .



Tips for Formulating Answerable Questions

1. Identify and focus upon main problem or disease
 - Divide question into either clinical, basic sciences, behavioral, or social dimensions
 - Categorize by subject within these broader divisions
 - This step will aid your subsequent search



2. Largely ignore distracting elements

- Remove the “noise” in question
- Amplify the “signal”



3. Describe the population:

- Age
- Geography
- Income
- Ethnicity
- Other?



4. Purpose of the Question:

a. Descriptive

b. Mechanistic (sometimes called
“Causal” or “Predictive”)

c. Comparative (or “Correlational”)



Descriptive Questions

- “How many people have diabetes in my community?”
- “What kinds of problems do people with diabetes have in my community?”



Mechanistic Questions

- “How does lower socio-economic status lead to higher incidence of diabetes mellitus?”
- “How does a diet high in sugary soft drinks cause diabetes mellitus in susceptible populations?”

Comparative Questions

- “Do people in my community experience higher rates of incidence for diabetes mellitus compared to other communities?”
- “Do people from lower socio-economic backgrounds experience higher rates of diabetes mellitus than people from upper middle class backgrounds?”



Realistic Scenario

- Identify and focus upon main problem, or disease **Diabetes Mellitus**
- Largely ignore distracting elements
- Describe the population:
 - Age **Multiple**, although teens and elderly noted
 - Geography **Assigned community**
 - Income **Possible variable**
 - Ethnicity **Possible variable**
- Purpose of the question **(see next screen)**



Possible Answerable Question

What are the rates of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus among different age groups in my community, and how do these rates compare to other areas such as Albuquerque, New Mexico, or the US?

Working Alone

- **Refine and focus the elements of your own tentative research topic on your handout into an answerable question**
 - Divide the question into broad types Categorize the question by subject
 - Largely ignore distractors
 - Describe the population
 - Purpose of the question
- You have only 4 Minutes



Activity Three

1. Pair up with a neighbor
2. Discuss both of your questions, and coach each other on refining and focusing on the handout
3. Prepare to report on your partner's question
4. You have only **5** minutes



Paired Question Outcome Reports



Tip # 5

Working with others makes
formulating and refining
questions much easier!



Tip #6

The question should contain all of the essential information within one sentence so it can be answered. This means that only the essential information will be present.

“The question stands by itself.”



The Next Steps



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