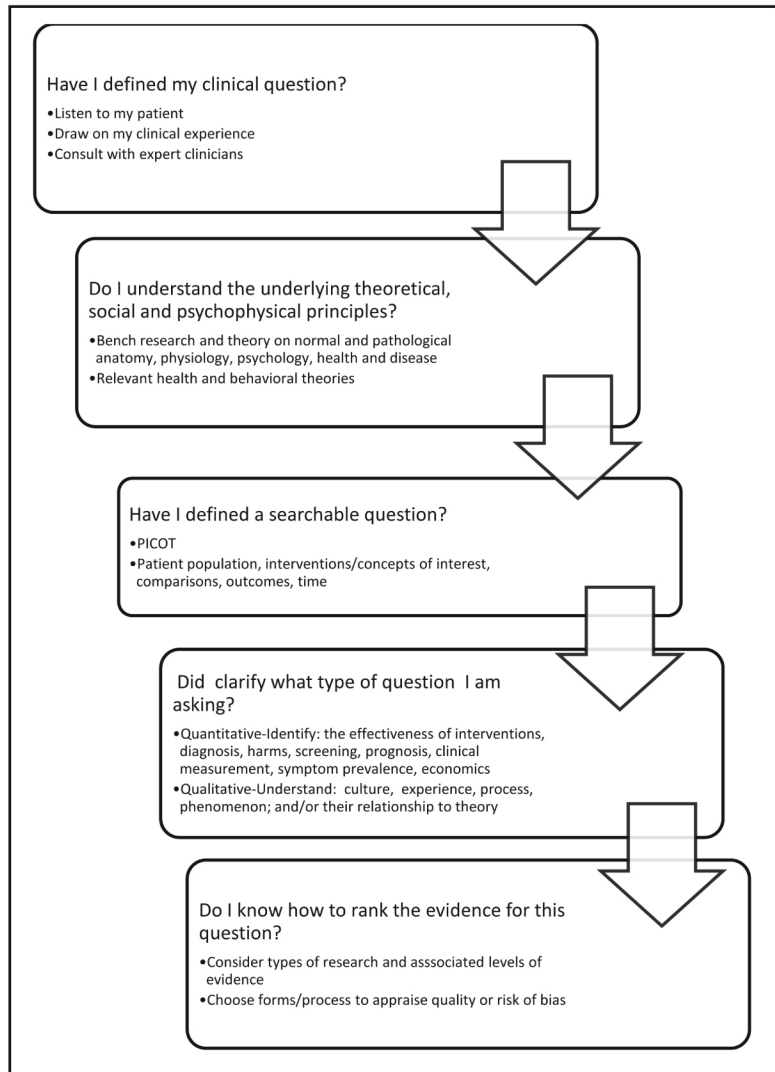


Figure 6-2. Moving from your clinical question to your appraisal of studies. This figure illustrates the critical link between the clinical question that drives your search for the right evidence and the process that you use to evaluate the quality of that evidence.



whether treatments work under ideal circumstances (efficacy trials) or in routine clinical practice situations (effectiveness trials). Once we know that treatments are effective under ideal conditions we may be more interested in effectiveness research that informs our understanding of how they work in practice. We may return to qualitative or bench methods at multiple points to explain the phenomena that arise from clinical research or observations. Once treatments are implemented it becomes important to have research that informs our understanding of potential harms from those interventions (monitoring for adverse events). Once we know the benefits and harms, we will be interested in research on how much it costs (cost-effectiveness research) and how it can be transferred into practice (knowledge translation).

Research does not always progress linearly along this continuum, because different research teams may be focusing on different elements of a problem. However, this cycle of evolving knowledge is important because it helps us appreciate different forms of evidence. Although descriptive research will ultimately be classified as a lower level of evidence in EBP rating systems, this work