# Tackling threshold concepts when teaching information literacy in a 'post-complex' world

Drawing inspiration from and parallels with the healthcare profession
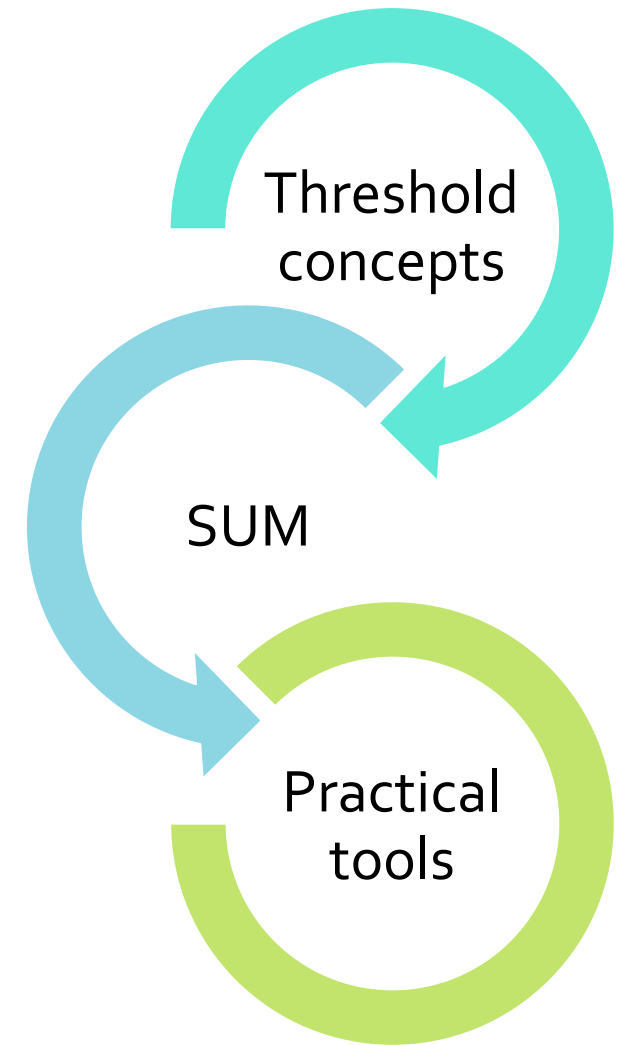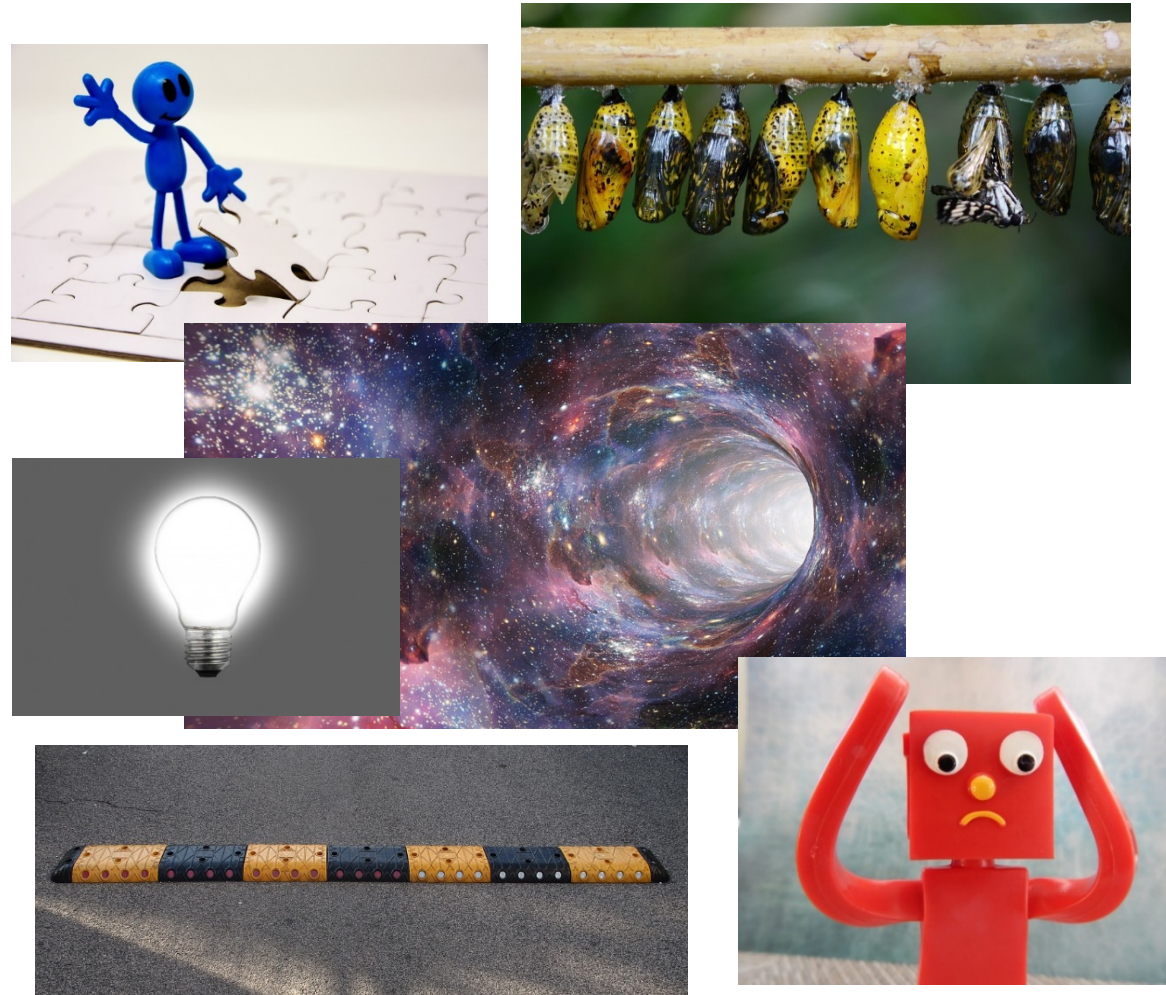
Penelope Cole

# Take a seat & play a game

# Workshop outline & learning objectives

- Identify the threshold concepts in your own area of work

- Design learning activities to support service users in overcoming these threshold concepts

Threshold concepts

SUM

Practical tools

# What are threshold concepts?

**7 Characteristics:**

Transformative

Troublesome

Irreversible

Integrative

Bounded

Constitutive

Discursive

(Meyer and Land, 2006)

## What is SUM? How does it link with TCs & IL?

Medical knowledge is troublesome – it has created a barrier between patients and themselves. Medical professionals hold all the "power". We live in a 'post-complex' world where everything is "easy" – it is frustrating when things take longer, or are harder, than we expect. SUM aims to empower the patient (Murphy, 2018).

*"The shared understanding of medicine is a process whereby people are enabled to understand the best knowledge and resources available to meet their health needs."* (Lehman, 2018)

IL = enabling and empowering individuals to find and use information to meet their needs

"Disciplinary lens" (Hofer, Hanick & Townsend, 2018)

## Your turn

- What are the Threshold Concepts your service users face?

- Does is vary between groups?

- Does is change throughout the year(s)?

Concept of research

Own ability

Post-

What is research

Student expectation

Troublesome selves

Troublesome environment

Information is complicated

Martindale, Land, Rattray and Anderson in Land, Meyer and Flanagan, 2016

Troublesome knowledge

Appropriate learning activities
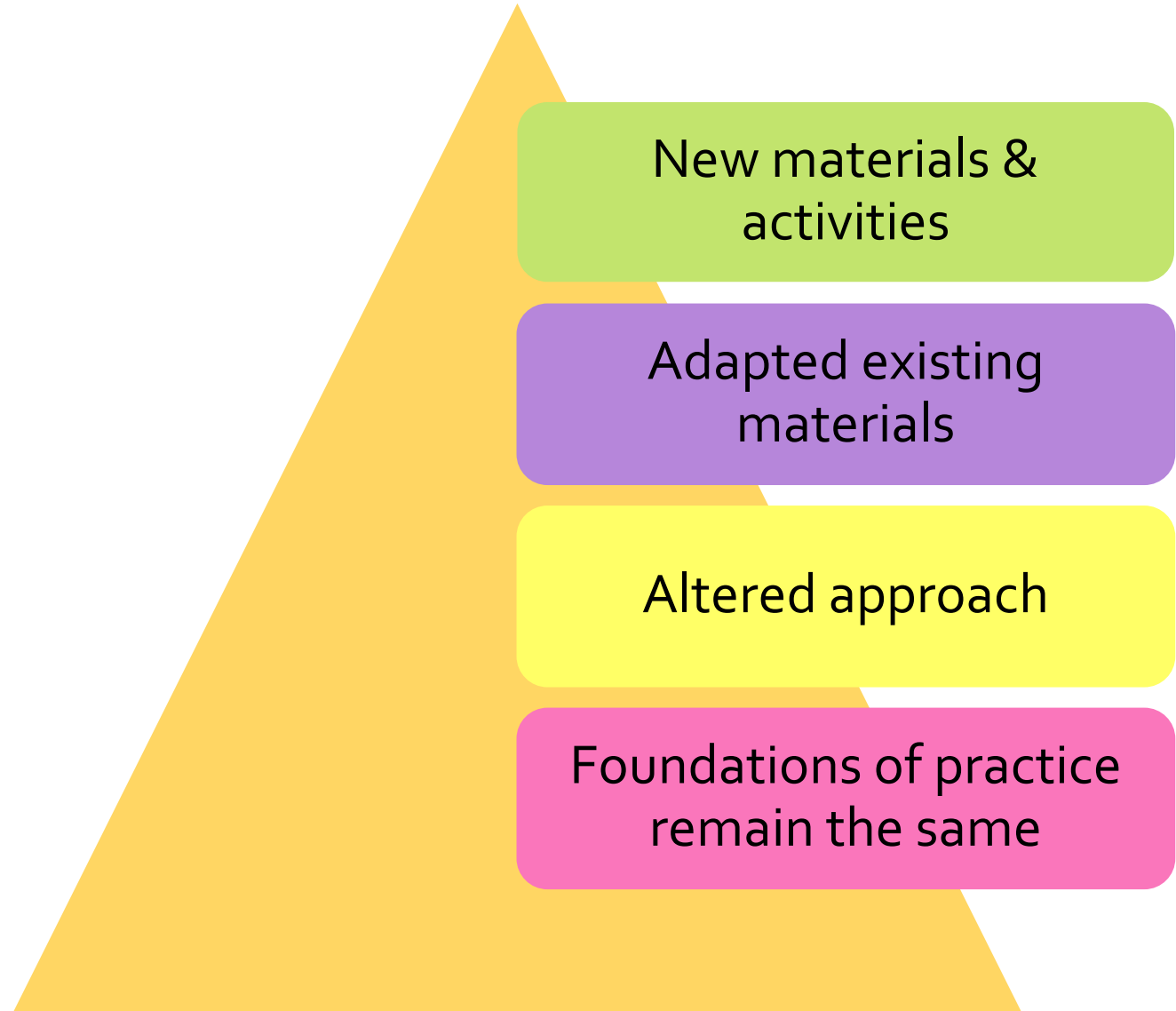
Transformed knowledge

What have I done to help students overcome TCs?

New materials & activities

Adapted existing materials

Altered approach

Foundations of practice remain the same

**Altered approach**

- Stop apologizing
- Focus on the TC
- Make it obvious

**Adapted materials**

- Rephrasing topics as case studies
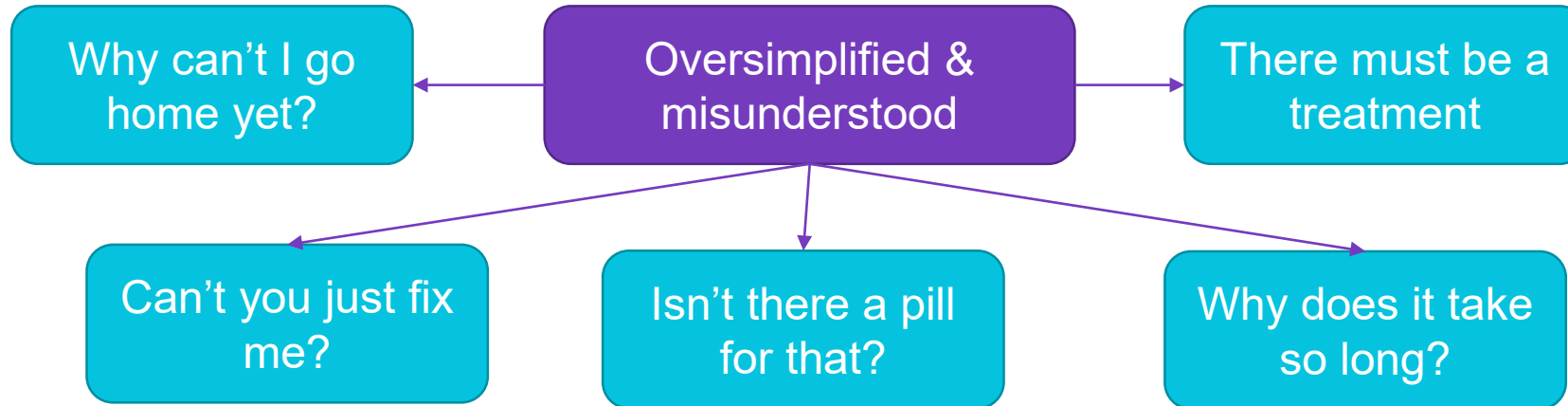- PICO to search plan

**New materials & activities**

- Put TC on a slide
- Generic tasks
  - Where's Wally
  - Puzzles
  - Images/videos

Foundation: embedded, contextual, practical

# Medicine/healthcare is complicated

**Why can't I go home yet?** ← **Oversimplified & misunderstood** → **There must be a treatment**

**Can't you just fix me?**

**Isn't there a pill for that?**

**Why does it take so long?**

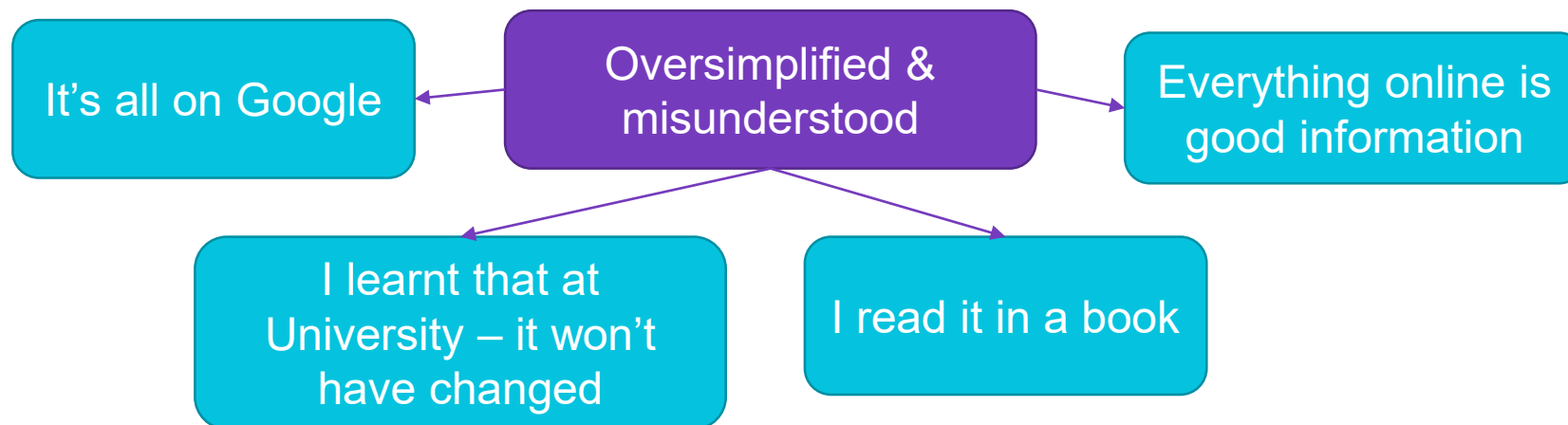It's not that simple, Clinical decisions rely on evidence, expertise and time

Evidence comes from billions of pounds spent on research annually

Research produces information, vast quantities of information.

Make it obvious

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# Information is complicated

Put the TC on the slide

It's all on Google

Oversimplified & misunderstood

Everything online is good information

I learnt that at University – it won't have changed

I read it in a book

It's not that simple, however skills can be developed, knowledge gained and systems navigated to make the process easier

It all starts with your library/resource centre/literature available (at University or in practice)

So let's do this…

Make it obvious & stop apologizing

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My topic:

What do I already know about this topic? Key theories, policies, authors etc.

Where am I going to search? What resources will I use?

Which search tools can I use?
Consider combining terms, phrase searching & truncation

What keywords can I use to search for this topic?
Add more rows/columns if needed

| Keyword /concept | Synonyms /alternative terms | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cognitive behavioural therapy | CBT | | |
| Teenagers | Young people | adolescents | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Search strings to try e.g. ("cognitive behavioural therapy" OR CBT) AND teen*
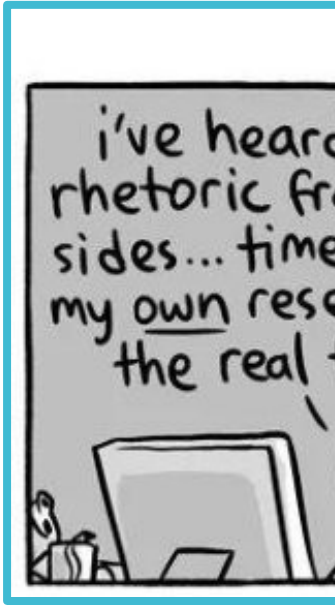
Adapted from PICO table to suit other subjects

# New materials

- Where's Wally – methodical approach – he's there but so are lots of others that look like him – examine closer

- Puzzle without a box – you won't know the answer – piece together information – try not to be bias

- Analogies/ metaphors (Holliday, 2017 and Brown, 2018)

- Images & Video clips

# Words & pictures

Shencomix (2016) **Taking the facts** [Online] Available from: < https://imgur.com/gallery/9MRwt > [Accessed 25ᵗʰ March 2019]

Straub, K. (2016) **The real truth** [Online] Available from: < http://chainsawsuit.com/comic/2014/09/16/on-research > [Accessed 25th March 2019 ]

# Link materials together

# Create a plan

- What have you done in the past? Could you map these closer to your identified TCs?

- What would you like to try?

- How would that fit with the curriculum design and intended learning outcomes?

# Recap & round up

1. Identify the threshold concept(s) your users face

2. Establish how you would help students to overcome it

3. Adapt existing learning activities

4. Develop learning activities (if needed)

5. Test & gather feedback

Remember it <u>does not</u> have to be a big change

## References

Brown, E. (2018) *Learning through metaphor : an introduction to metaphors in information literacy.* Estonia: Innovative Libraries

Hofer, A., Hanick, S. L. and Townsend, L. (2018) *Transforming Information Literacy Instruction: Threshold Concepts in theory and practice*. California: ABC-CLIO

Holliday, W. (2017) Frame Works: Using Metaphor in Theory and Practice in Information Literacy. *Communications in Information Literacy.* 11(1), pp. 4-20. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1148867.pdf

Kruger, J. and Dunning, D. (1999) Unskilled and unaware of it: how difficulties in recognizing one's own incompetence lead to inflated self-awareness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 7 (6) pp. 1211 – 1134. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.77.6.1121

Land, R., Meyer, J. and Flanagan, M., T. eds. (2016) Threshold Concepts in Practice. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers

Lehman, R. (2018) *Email to P Cole.* 30 October 2018.

Meyer, J. and Land, R. (eds.) (2006) *Overcoming barriers to student understanding: threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge*. London: Routledge

Murphy, M. (2018) Encouraging clinicians to source evidence-based material and share decisions with patients. Health Libraries Group Conference 2018. 14 June, Keele University. https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1zpWYxszO8oToX9hSPepvdIHTcqVThTUf

## Recommended reading

Godbey, S., Wainscott, S., B., and Goodman, X. eds. (2017) *Disciplinary Applications of Information Literacy Threshold Concepts.* Chicago: Association of Academic and Research Libraries.

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