

The link between clinical audit and research is evident in the clinical effectiveness initiative.

Without research we won't know what clinically effective practice is; without audit we won't know whether it is being practised.

The audit process also assists with the dissemination of evidence-based practice from research.

Clinical audit can be viewed as the final stage of a good clinical research programme.

Alternatively research could be seen as a preface to the clinical audit process.

Sometimes research can identify areas for audit and audit can also pinpoint areas where research evidence is lacking.

It is sometimes hard to find the dividing line between research and audit. It could be possible that larger projects may contain elements of both audit and research.

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There is a web site with a useful training package :

www.hop.man.ac.uk/academic/nursingmidwifery1/Online-Training/Clin-Effect/Clinical-Effectiveness-home.htm



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Audit versus Research

Salford Royal Hospitals 
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Audit versus Research

In this leaflet we will look at the similarities and differences between audit and research.

Clinical Audit is not research. They are closely related but distinct activities.

The Similarities :

- Both involve answering a specific question relating to quality of care;
- Both can be carried out either prospectively (collected as you go along) or retrospectively (collected afterwards).

The Differences :

Clinical audit is about making sure that knowledge is being used to best effect. Clinical audit is a way of finding out whether we are doing what we should be doing. Are we following guidelines? Are we applying best practice?

Research is about creating new knowledge about whether interventions work, or to explain or understand an issue.

Clinical Audit

A systematic approach to identify possible improvements and to provide a mechanism for bringing them about. Answers the question, 'Are we following best practice?'

Is usually carried out on a relatively small population over a short time span.

Never involves a completely new treatment

Never involves experiments on human subjects, whether patients, patients as volunteers or health volunteers.

Is based on a sample size, which is acceptable.

Responsibility to act on findings rests with an identified lead senior clinician. Findings influence the activities of local clinicians and teams.

Research

A systematic investigation to add to the body of knowledge. Creates new knowledge about what works and what doesn't.

Is usually carried out on a large scale over a prolonged period. May involve a completely new treatment.

May involve experiments on human subjects, whether patients, patients as volunteers or healthy volunteers.

Is underpinned by clearly defined research methods.

Responsibility to act on findings is not clear. Findings influence the activity of clinical practice as a whole.

For example, Research might ask :

What is the best way of treating deep vein thrombosis ?

Audit would then ask :

How are we treating deep vein thrombosis and how does this compare with accepted best practice ?