

Audit Vs Research

Audit and Research have much in common; they share a rigorous approach to methodology in terms of design, procedure, analysis and interpretation of data. At times, the distinction between Research and Audit can be blurred. However there are a number of major differences and the table below provides some assistance in determining what is audit and what is research.

Clinical audit: is a way of finding out whether you are doing what you should be doing by asking if you are following guidelines and applying best practice.

Research: evaluates practice or compares alternative practices, with the purpose of contributing to a body of knowledge by asking what you should be doing.

Audit	Research
Never involves experiments, whether on healthy volunteers, or patients as volunteers	May involve experiments on human subjects whether patients, patients as volunteers or healthy volunteers
Is a systematic approach to the peer review of medical care in order to identify opportunities for improvement and to provide a mechanism for bringing them about	Is a systematic investigation which aims to increase the sum of knowledge
Never involves allocating patients randomly to different treatment groups	May involve allocating patients randomly to different treatment groups
Never involves a completely new treatment	May involve a completely new treatment
Never involves a disturbance to the patients beyond that required for normal clinical management	May involve extra disturbance or work beyond that required for normal clinical management
May involve patients with the same problem being given different treatments, but only after full discussion of the known advantages and disadvantages of each treatment. The patients are allowed to choose freely which treatment they get	May involve the application of strict selection criteria to patients with the same problem before they are entered into the research study
Measures against a standard	Usually involves an attempt to test a hypothesis