

Understanding the Difference between Research and Other Activities.

| Theme | Clinical Audit | Service Evaluation | Research |
|-------------------------|---|--|--|
| Definition | Clinical audit is a clinically led quality improvement process that seeks to improve patient care and outcomes through systematic review of care against explicit criteria and acting to improve care when standards are not met. | Service evaluation seeks to assess how well a service is achieving its intended aims. It is undertaken to benefit the people using a particular healthcare service and is designed and conducted with the sole purpose of defining or judging the current service. | Research is designed and conducted to generate new generalisable or transferrable knowledge. It includes both qualitative and quantitative studies that aim to generate new hypothesis as well as studies that aim to test existing or new hypothesis. |
| Answers question | Clinical audit demonstrates whether a predetermined standard is being met. | Service evaluation tells how well a service is working. | Research demonstrates what should be done. |
| Purpose | To find out if best practice is being practised for quality assurance and improvement purposes. | To evaluate current practices for information purposes. The information can inform management decisions. | To generate new knowledge and find out what treatments, interventions or practices are the most effective. |
| Context | Carried out at local or national level. | Carried out at local level only. | Carried out at local or national level. |
| Methods | Measures practice against evidence-based clinical standards. | Measures current service without comparison against standards. | Has a systematic, quantitative or qualitative approach to investigation. |
| REC Review | No, but ethical considerations should still be considered. | No, but ethical considerations should still be considered. | Yes. |