

Comparison of the Characteristics of Research, Quality Improvement, and Program Evaluation Activities

	Research Project	Quality Improvement (Evidence-Based Practice) [EBP-QI]	Program Evaluation
INTENT	Develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge (e.g., testing hypotheses)	Improve a practice or process within a particular institution or ensure it confirms with expected norms	Improve a specific program
DESIGN	Contributes to generalizable knowledge; may involve randomization of individuals to different treatments, regimens, or processes	Does not contribute to generalizable knowledge; focuses on identifying problems associated with the standard of care, implementing and monitoring corrective action, and studying its effectiveness; does not define the standard of care or best practice	Does not contribute to generalizable knowledge; does not involve randomization of individuals; may involve comparison of variations in programs
EFFECT ON PROGRAM OR PRACTICE EVALUATED	Findings of the study are not expected to directly affect institutional or programmatic practice	Findings of the study are expected to directly affect institutional practice and identify corrective action(s) needed	Findings of the evaluation are expected to directly affect the conduct of the program and identify improvements
POPULATION	Usually involves a subset of individuals—universal participation of an entire clinic, program, or department is not expected; generally, statistical justification for sample size used to ensure endpoints can be met	Information on all or most receiving a particular treatment or undergoing a particular practice or process expected to be included; exclusion of information from some individuals significantly affects conclusions	Information on all or most participants within or affected by receiving a particular treatment or undergoing a particular practice or process expected to be used; exclusion of information from some individuals significantly affects conclusions
BENEFITS	Participants may or may not benefit directly – benefit, if any, to individuals is incidental or delayed	Participants expected to benefit directly from the activities	No benefit to participants expected; evaluation concentrates on program improvements or whether the program should continue
DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS	Intent to publish or present generally presumed at the outset of project as part of professional expectations, obligations; dissemination of information usually occurs in research/scientific publications or other research/scientific fora; results expected to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge by filling a gap in scientific knowledge or supporting, refining, or refuting results from other research studies	Intent to publish or present generally may not be presumed at the outset of the project; dissemination of information often does not occur beyond the institution evaluated; dissemination of information may occur in quality improvement publications/fora; when published or presented to a wider audience, the intent is to suggest potentially effective models, strategies, assessment tools or provide benchmarks or base rates rather than to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge	Intent to publish or present generally presumed at the outset of the project; dissemination of information to program stakeholders and participants; may be publicly posted (e.g., website) to ensure transparency of results; when published or presented to a wider audience, the intent is to suggest potentially effective models, strategies, assessment tools or provide benchmarks or base rates rather than to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge

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