

Quality Improvement Projects and Research: Similarities and Differences

Research

Quality Improvement Projects

- Tests a hypothesis
- Contributes to generalizable knowledge on a broader scale



Objective

- Improve or assess a practice or process locally at an institution
- Can be related to cost, operations, productivity, quality

- High quality methods and findings may be publishable
- Intended to benefit future patients



Strengths

- Compares a program or process to an already established standard
- Does not increase risk to patients
- Results are evaluated and strategies are quickly implemented

- Length of approval process may be longer
- Less urgency to disseminate results quickly
- Participants may or may not directly benefit



Weaknesses

- Depending on content and design of project may be harder to publish findings



Similarities

- IRBs may require submission, regardless of whether a project is research or quality improvement
- Detailed procedures and plans for the protection of human subjects is required

Tips for deciding which is best for your project:

- Start with the question your proposed project will answer. Would research or quality improvement be best to meet the objective of this project?
- Consider the timeline for acquisition of results. Often, quality improvement projects are faster.
- If you are unsure if the method for answering your question is research or a quality improvement project, consider contacting your institution's IRB.

