

The Difference Between Quality Assurance and Research

Research asks the question *“What ...?”*

Quality Assurance asks the question *“How are we doing?”*

Quality Assurance and Research have much in common; they share a rigorous approach to methodology in terms of design, procedure, analysis and interpretation of data. However there are a number of major differences:

Quality Assurance	Research
Quality assurance is a systematic approach to review of practices and procedures in order to identify possible improvements and to provide a mechanism for bring them about.	Research is a systematic investigation which aims to increase the sum of knowledge. It usually involves the testing of a hypothesis or theory.
Quality assurance raises questions that might be answered by further research.	Research generates the knowledge that may be tested in quality assurance.
Quality assurance is a test of whether things are being done as well as they could/should be. It compares current practice with current standards/best practices.	Research is the act of finding the correct thing to do and identifying the most effective form of intervention. Research may help determine what is or might be best practice.
Quality assurance does not consider a completely new treatment but tests the adherence to a treatment that is considered to be best practice.	Research may involve a completely new treatment and usually investigates an area where there is no knowledge of the best practice.
Quality assurance results are “local” to the participant population/location/time.	Research results can be generalized across a wide population
Quality assurance results are generally for “internal” information	Research results are generally for “external” information
Quality assurance requires the participation of site specific people and departments. The data relates only to the specific site or area	Research requires the participation of patients and others outside of the specific site or area so that a representative sample can be obtained and the results generalized
Quality assurance is a continuous and on-going process which includes a follow-up after a period of time	Research often will have a defined “endpoint” which is researched when an adequate sample size has been obtained.
Quality assurance results are disseminated at the local or internal level to educate and publicize how to achieve best practice	Research results are published universally to share the knowledge with a wide user base of persons.