

About audit

What is audit?

The systematic critical analysis of the quality of medical care, including the procedures for diagnosis and treatment, the use of resources and the resulting outcome and quality of life for the patients (NHS Medical Audit, 1989)

Audit is a powerful educational tool for improving performance and patient care. Clinical audit is the critical appraisal of an activity within the healthcare practice. It consists of reviewing and monitoring an aspect of performance and comparing the results with agreed criteria. Audit provides the opportunity to look at current practice and then to make changes based on what has been learnt.

Purpose

- to assess whether we do what we think we do
- to instigate changes as required to meet standards
- to reassess the effects, if any, of the changes.

Advantages

- improved efficiency of practice
- improved effectiveness of patient care

How to audit

Audit should be:

- achievable - easy to collect data
- effective - clearly stated criteria and standards
- efficient - short, structured questions, evidence-based
- affordable - keep it simple

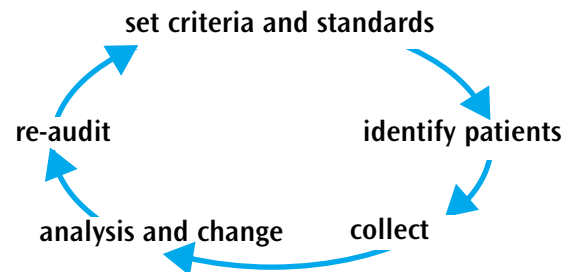
Criteria

- The aspect(s) of patient care that defines the parameters of quality ('counsel of perfection'), e.g. clinically reassess all patients on repeat NSAID every three months.

Standard

- Level to which criterion can reasonably be met. The proportion of patients who satisfy the criterion, e.g. clinically reassess 70% of patients on repeat NSAID every three months.

The audit cycle



Identifying patients

Varies according to audit.

- Agree on method, e.g. computerised records, prescriptions, disease registers, age-sex registers, opportunistic cases
- Agree sample size, patient subset
- Agree sample process - random, systematic

Collecting data

Identify:

- method of recording data
- who will do recording
- who will check accuracy of recording

Data collection forms simplify the process - these are provided in this package for all the audits.

You will also find Summary sheets to record the results of the audits.

Data analysis and introduction of change

Analysis involves:

- comparison of results with standard set
- identifying areas that need further attention
- agreeing policies for improving care

Change involves:

- ownership and agreement of any changes
- planning the changes
- developing a practice protocol for the area audited

Re-audit

Review the situation:

- Repeat the audit after suitable time interval, e.g. six months
- Use same criteria and standard but different sample of patients
- Evaluate, assess and review changes in practice behaviour