

Getting involved in clinical audits

Explore the reasons for getting involved in clinical audits, what it involves and get tips and things to consider.

Clinical audits compare current healthcare practice with guidelines for good practice. They help to assess whether patients are receiving the best quality of care and can result in improvements. You have the option to do an audit while at medical school. Once on your [Foundation training programme](#) ^[1], you have to do at least one audit a year.

Why do an audit?

Getting involved in an audit can be beneficial to your future applications for foundation and specialty training. It will:

- show your commitment to a specialty (if you undertake an audit in that area)
- be an opportunity to network with senior clinicians
- give you the chance to explore a specialty, if you're undecided about your future career path
- allow you to develop transferrable skills ^[2]
- show you are motivated to make positive changes
- possibly give you the opportunity to publish your results

From a personal point of view, any changes made as a result of your audit can be very rewarding.

• **Choosing an audit topic**

Audits can be in a specialty or a general area, eg looking at on-call practices in a hospital.

- find out what audits are planned. If your hospital has an audit co-ordinator, they will be able to tell you what needs to be done

- almost all hospitals have an audit committee run by consultants. If you have an original idea for an audit, request approval by the committee
- there may be a national audit project that interests you. Information will be available through relevant medical societies

• **The audit process**

- firstly, identify a worthwhile topic (see above)
- set a measurable standard, eg xx% of patients admitted to yyy should have their obs done within an hour
- collect data. This may be through surveys, such as questionnaires, or analysing archived information
- decide whether your standard has been achieved. If so, was the audit necessary to start with? If your standard hasn't been achieved, find out why
- implement change if necessary. This might be through staff training or a new process
- re-audit once changes have been implemented
- present your results to your supervisors. Consider whether similar changes could improve healthcare elsewhere

• **Tips and considerations**

- pick a topic that genuinely interests you
- try to do something original
- choose a worthwhile topic – one that you feel could make a real difference to many patients and/or members of staff
- working on a topic where you can generate lots of data will provide more robust results
- if you choose a topic that is quantifiable, figures can be presented and used as a standard for the future
- remember that it can take time to get permission from governing bodies to access the information you may need
- bear in mind that if you're on a short placement, you may not be able to finish the audit
- if you're working in a group or for someone, be prepared to feel like a 'data collector'
- you are likely to be asked about audits at future interviews, so expect to answer questions about them

• **Help and resources**

- the [Clinical Audit Support Centre](#) ^[3] website has lots of information on audits, and provides resources and audit tools (eg online templates)
- advice on audits may be available through the Royal Colleges

- guidelines on audits are available through your local hospital or the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) [4]
- the British Medical Journal (BMJ) Careers has an article on how to publish an audit [5]
- the Online Journal of Clinical Audits [6] is an accessible database and reference area to publish audit reports

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/medical-school/getting-involved-clinical-audits>

Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/working-health/information-doctors/foundation-training-programme> [2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/resources/transferable-skills-medical-students> [3] <http://www.clinicalauditsupport.com/> [4] <http://www.nice.org.uk/> [5] <http://careers.bmj.com/careers/advice/view-article.html?id=2152> [6] <http://www.clinicalaudits.com/index.php/ojca/index>