Characteristics of Evidence Based Practice (EBP), Quality Improvement (QI), and Research Projects

Evidence-based Practice

- Goal is to find existing research that demonstrates which policy, practice, or procedure is the best known way to produce a specific outcome in a specific population.
- Asks "Does our current policy, practice, or standard operating procedure reflect the best available evidence?"
- If the best practice differs from the organization's current practice, the organization adopts the best practice and evaluates whether outcomes improve after the change.

Quality Improvement

- Goal is to improve patient outcomes by methodically identifying areas where performance falls short of the standards set by the organization.
- Asks "Are we optimally performing our current policy, practice, or procedure when we deliver care?"
- QI projects use evidence from the literature to implement interventions aimed at improving performance to meet the standard (e.g., staff education, workflow redesign, revised communications, etc.), and then evaluates whether the intervention improved performance.

Research

- Goals may be to describe a phenomenon, develop or test a new method or hypothesis, or evaluate the implementation of a new method.
- Research is any systematic investigation designed to contribute to generalizable knowledge. Methods vary depending on the aims of the study.
- Asks questions such as "Is one policy, practice, or procedure superior to another for achieving an outcome?" or "What are factors and processes that lead to an outcome?"

Differentiating EBP and QI from Research

The criteria and rationale, which are based on federal guidelines and institutional policy, are described below.

I. Intent

The intent of a ***research*** project is to generate new knowledge and disseminate findings to the scientific community. While a research study may also have direct benefits to patients in the organization, the primary purpose is advancing knowledge to benefit patients generally.

The intent of ***EBP*** and ***QI*** projects is to improve the process of care delivery or implement a new practice standard within the organization. While the proceedings of these projects may be

published, the intent of EBP and QI projects is not primarily for publication or dissemination of findings.

II. Scope

Projects that implement and evaluate new, modified or adapted practices that have not been tested previously are considered ***research***.

EBP and ***QI*** projects involve the implementation or optimization of care that is already the standard or has already been tested in other environments to demonstrate safety and efficacy.

III. Data collection and storage

Projects that collect data through intervention (e.g., drawing labs) or interaction (e.g., conducting surveys or focus groups) with the population are ***research***.

EBP, ***QI***, and ***research*** projects must take steps to protect data confidentiality. Regardless of the type of project, teams must (1) access only the minimum amount of data required to meet the objective; (2) establish and follow a plan for how the data will be stored and who can access it; (3) and destroy the data after the project and dissemination of findings is complete.

IV. Risk

Research projects may or may not introduce risks greater than those associated with the organization's current policy, practice, or procedure. The IRB is responsible for evaluating the level of risk associated with research, ensuring that appropriate measures are in place to reduce risks, and determining whether the level of risk is acceptable in relation to the potential benefits.

EBP and ***QI*** projects must not introduce risks greater than those associated with the organization's current policy, practice, or procedure.

V. Benefit

Research projects may or may not have a potential for direct benefit to the population included in the project.

EBP and ***QI*** projects must have the potential for direct benefit to the population included in the project.

VI. Methods

If there is genuine uncertainty about which policy, practice, or procedure is best, a ***research*** project is needed to generate this knowledge. Since the best policy, practice, or

procedure is not yet known, it is ethical to assign some individuals to receive one and some to receive another through randomization or other means of assignment to a control group.

Since ***EBP*** and ***QI*** projects implement and optimize policies, practices, or procedures that have already been shown to be superior for achieving an outcome, EBP and QI projects generally will not include randomization or other means of assignment to a control group. EBP and QI projects typically employ a pre-post design to compare outcomes before and after the best policy, practice, or procedure is implemented or optimized.