Other Issues to Consider

Just because a procedure or service has one or more characteristics, it may not make an ideal clinical audit topic. Other areas that need to be considered are: -

- Is it practical to undertake the audit?
- Can you get the information you need?
- Is the problem amenable to change?
- Is the topic a priority for the organisation?
- Are good standards / guidelines available? If not, is there consensus agreement on good practice?
- Who needs to be involved to ensure changes can be implemented?
- Does the topic pertain to national policy initiatives?

Use the table overleaf to determine if your topic is suitable for clinical audit or if you have several topics and are not sure which one would result in the greatest improvement.

If you have most of your ticks in the "Yes" or "Maybe" columns of the table then you probably have a good topic for clinical audit. But is your idea a clinical audit or a research project? For more information see the leaflet 'The Difference between Audit and Research'.

Contact details and further information on any part of this leaflet can be found at:

http://nhsbtweb/group_services/clinical/statistics_clinical_audit/index.asp

Tool for Prioritising Clinical Audit Topics

	Yes	Maybe	Don't know	No
Is the topic High Risk?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is the topic High Volume?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is the topic High Cost?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is there wide variation in practice?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is there local concern about practice?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Are Standards / Guidelines available?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is the topic important locally?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is the topic important nationally?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Can practice be changed?	☐	☐	☐	☐

NHS
Blood and Transplant

How to Identify Clinical Audit Topics

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Statistics & Clinical Audit

Clinical Audit Topics

Clinical Audit aims to show that the level of care provided is appropriate and up-to-date by comparing practice against available standards and guidelines.

However, with the huge range of activities and decisions made during the care of patients and donors, it can often be difficult to decide which areas to audit. Clinical audit staff can help you in deciding what to audit and can give you ideas from previously completed audits.

Identifying Audit Topics

Some clinical audit projects are initiated by organisations such as the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, the Care Quality Commission or Royal Colleges. Within NHSBT, national audits may be initiated via an annual audit programme, various clinical groups or individual clinical or scientific staff.

In addition to participating in national audits, health professionals are expected to carry out clinical audits in their area of work. However, selecting an area of your own practice to audit can be difficult.

Remember - When choosing audit topics, focus on the areas that will lead to improvements

Which Type of Audit?

There are three types of clinical audit in NHSBT:

Local

For example, how does a single collection team's practice compare with national infection control guidelines? As results are from a single team they can only change the practice of that team. This type of audit may the basis of a pilot for a larger regional or national audit.

Regional

For example, how does the practice of collection teams in the south-east region compare with national infection control guidelines. This area has more scope for changing practice than a local audit.

National

For example, how does the infection control practice of many or all collection teams nationally compare to national guidance. The results of this type of audit have the most potential to make improvements to practice. Infection control practice can be changed in all collection teams nationally.

How to Choose an Audit Topic

To ensure the greatest potential for improvement, look for areas that have the following characteristics: -

High Risk

The procedure / service may lead to harm to patients/donors, staff or the organisation. For example, incorrect clinical advice, late laboratory results or inappropriate donor selection.

High Volume

Frequent procedures or many patients/donors/users are involved. For example Acceptance of Tissue Donors.

High Cost

Activities that are costly in monetary terms or highly resource dependent. e.g. Processing and Issue of autologous serum eyedrops.

Areas identified through Incidents

Causes of concern that have been identified, from complaints, adverse events and quality incidents.

Wide Variation in Practice

Are things done differently in different areas? For example record keeping, documentation, sample labelling and out of hours therapeutic apheresis practice may all show variation in practice in different areas.