**Is it Research or Program Assessment?**

Program Assessment / Quality Improvement / Quality Assurance consist of activities undertaken to measure effectiveness of a process, program or service, the results of which are to be shared only with individuals associated with the process, program, or service being evaluated. Research consists of a systematic investigation designed to develop or contribute to generalizable public knowledge, the results of which will be shared with individuals whether directly or indirectly associated with the particular investigation.

The results of the Program Assessment / Quality Improvement / Quality Assurance are intended for a narrow, internal audience, largely restricted to those directly associated with the activity; whereas research is intended for a broader audience, especially persons outside the inquiry activity..

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|  | Research | PA/QI/QA |
| Purpose | To make a careful, systematic, patient  study, investigation or probing inquiry in some field of knowledge. | Evaluate a process, program, or system |
| Starting Point | There is a formal research question,  literature review. | An established set of standards |
| Benefits | Knowledge sought need not benefit subjects involved in study. | Knowledge that is sought, directly benefits the process/program/system. |
| Risks/Burdens | May put subjects at risk | No risk, with exception of possible privacy/confidentiality concerns |
| Data Collection | Systematic or exploratory methods | Systematic data collection limited to aspects of a particular process, program or system. |
| End Point | Establish certain facts, discover  phenomena or broad principles that contribute to public, discipline-based or interdisciplinary body of knowledge. | Improve a specific program/process/system or some specific portion of one. |
| Testing/Analysis | Describe frequency and importance of  factors, inquire about existence and strength of relationships among factors, determine temporal order of factors,  establish likelihood of certain outcomes. | Compare the program/process/system to established set of standards |
| Intended Result | Share findings with individuals associated  with the investigation and individuals not associated with the investigation; disseminate in public forums,  publications or other media | Share findings with only those individuals associated with the evaluated process/program/system. |