

CASC tip sheet #2

Identifying best practice for your audit

BACKGROUND

In 1992, R. Smith wrote in the *British Medical Journal* 'research is concerned with discovering the right thing to do; audit with ensuring it is done right!' This may be an old quote, but it stands the test of time and critically reminds us that clinical audit is a discipline that relies on those involved starting out knowing what best practice looks like. In a nutshell, audit measures against agreed standards. This short document provides tips on how to find them!

5 ways to identify best practice

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)

It is not an exaggeration to say that since being established in 1999, NICE have been a 'game-changer' when it comes to clinical audit. To date, they have produced over 1,000 pieces of guidance on a vast array of clinical topics. NICE are respected internationally and many local and national audits rely on the standards produced by NICE. Visit the NICE website, [here](#).



SIGN and WHO

SIGN are the Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (often referred to as 'NICE north of the border'). SIGN produce reputable guidelines and advice. Visit SIGN [here](#). The World Health Organisation formulate best practice on a wide array of topics from breastfeeding to safe surgery. Visit WHO [here](#).



Royal colleges and professional bodies

Royal Colleges are implicitly linked to audit as many are responsible for running various mandatory national clinical audits. Most Royal Colleges and professional bodies provide best practice guidance for their members. For example, in terms of record-keeping: both the Royal College of Physicians and the Nursing and Midwifery Council publish clear audit-able guidance for their members.



Local best practice

Many audit standards can be derived from local best practice. Indeed, healthcare teams often take national guidance and adapt this to their setting. Any local documents such as: guidelines, protocols, care pathways, standard operating procedures, etc. may be used to harvest appropriate best practice for audit work..



Searching the literature

Sometimes it is hard to locate current best practice with international, national and local searches turning up little best practice. In such circumstances, it is acceptable to search through current literature to identify current best practice. As a team CASC often do this when conducting audits on patients in hospices with very rare conditions. We highly recommend NICE Evidence Search, available [here](#).

