

Introduction

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Surgeons are innovators and a key aspect of a surgical career is to constantly adapt, tweak and improve surgical techniques and treatments to provide the best outcomes for those under our care. In addition, few others in the hospital use more technology or devices on a day-to-day basis than surgeons. It is therefore beholden upon all surgeons to be able to critically evaluate both our individual performance and the impact of adaptations in techniques, devices and treatment pathways on the individual and collective outcomes of our patients. Involvement in research and audit activities will form a stable cornerstone within a long and successful surgical career. The aim of this chapter is to outline both how to undertake a successful audit cycle and how to design and conduct a surgical research study. Key aspects associated with enhanced chances of a successful project are discussed, including how collaboration with others can be crucial. Large numbers of clinical papers appear in the surgical literature every year. Many are flawed, and it is important that a surgeon has the skills to examine publications critically. The best way to develop a critical understanding of the research and audit undertaken by others is to perform studies of one's own. The hardest part of audit and research is writing it up, and the hardest article to write is the first. This chapter contains the information required to write a surgical paper and to evaluate the publications of others.

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