

Table 1.
The Research/QI Differentiation Tool

	Research	Quality Improvement	Not Sure
Which phrase best describes the purpose of your project?	To generate new knowledge.	To improve internal processes, practices, costs, or productivity.	
What are you trying to accomplish with this project?	To test a new, innovative practice.	To measure an existing practice that is an approved procedure or that has been shown effective in the literature.	
Who will most likely benefit from your project?	Future patients (or other targeted population) mostly will benefit.	Most of the subjects that participate in the study in the setting, as well as future patients (or other targeted population), will benefit.	
Will participants be placed at any risk during the project? Consider risks from disclosure of protected health information, or risks from changes in usual care delivery.	There will most likely be some risk incurred by participants. ** Will need IRB approval, even if QI study.	There will be no risks beyond the usual care.	
How will you determine how many participants to include?	Through a formal power analysis.	Will use a small sample size, but large enough to observe change.	
Will you try to randomize participants into different groups?	Yes.	No.	
Could your project be done with participants outside your setting?	Yes, having participants outside the setting would add strength to the project.	No, having participants outside the setting would not make sense because another setting would not provide care the same way.	
What kind of tool will you use to collect data?	An instrument that is a valid and reliable measure of the concept to be tested.	A data collection tool that has been developed without rigorous testing.	
Will you be able to vary your protocol during the study?	No, it will be a strict protocol that cannot vary.	Yes, it will be an evolving protocol with rapid tests of change to seek immediate improvement.	
Will you be using an experimental or quasi-experimental design?	Yes.	No.	
How will you handle extraneous variables (factors that might interfere with your results)?	Try to control them, or measure them.	Acknowledge them, but do try not to interfere. They are a part of any real life experience.	
How will you analyze the data?	With inferential statistics to test for significance.	With descriptive statistics that demonstrate change, or graphs that show trends.	
How long do you anticipate your project will take?	It will take considerable time.	It will be done quickly through rapid cycles.	
Do you anticipate needing money or other resources to complete the project?	Yes.	Minimal.	
What do you plan to do with your findings?	Publish or present findings for others within the discipline.	Communicate findings within the hospital or department setting.	
How will your findings change practice?	Will change practice slowly, often after multiple studies validate the results.	Will change practice in my setting immediately.	