**Peer Review**

An editorial process used by certain journals to evaluate research articles or studies that have been submitted for publication. A panel of experts (peers) anonymously assesses the methodological quality, pertinence, uniqueness, etc. of such submissions, often offering suggestions for revision before making a final decision to reject or accept them for publication. Journals using this process are called peer reviewed (or refereed).

**Primary Research**

An investigation that collects original (primary) data. In scientific and medical research, the study data are then published in a scholarly journal as a primary research study. The authors of the article reporting the study results are also the principal investigators who conducted the research. One example of a primary research study is a randomized controlled trial. (See below for a definition.)

**Secondary Research**

Secondary research presents a discussion, summary, analysis or review of primary research. Examples of secondary research from the medical field are systematic reviews and meta-analyses. (See below for definitions.)

**Quantitative Research**

Quantitative research studies things that can be counted, and it often uses statistical manipulations of numbers to process data and summarize results. Main branches of the quantitative research family are: descriptive; correlational/predictive; quasi-experimental/experimental; single-subject; and meta-analysis.

**Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research "derives data from observation, interviews, or verbal interactions and focuses on the meanings and interpretations of the participants.” Qualitative studies, such as case studies or case reports, are conducted with no control group involved.

**Clinical Trial**

Pre-planned studies of the safety, efficacy, or optimum dosage schedule of one or more diagnostic, therapeutic, or prophylactic interventions in humans. Study participants are selected according to predetermined criteria of eligibility and are observed for predefined evidence of favorable and unfavorable effects.

**Literature Review**

A type of secondary research that assesses the research methodologies and significance of a collection of primary research studies on a given topic. State-of-the-art reviews address more current subjects.

**Systematic Review**

Systematic reviews begin with a clearly formulated question and use systematic and explicit methods to identify, select and critically appraise relevant research, and to collect and analyze data from the studies that are included in the review. Statistical methods, such as meta-analysis, may or may not be used to analyze and summarize the results of the included studies.

**Note:** Most of the definitions above are from the National Library of Medicine’s Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) Browser at [http://www.nlm.nih.gov/mesh/MBrowser.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/mesh/MBrowser.html).