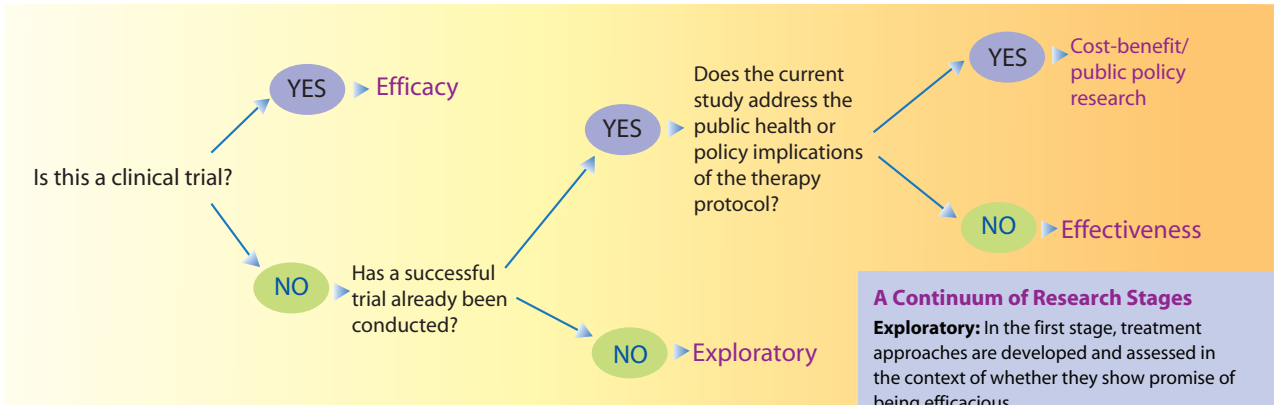


Figure 2: Stages of research



A Continuum of Research Stages

Exploratory: In the first stage, treatment approaches are developed and assessed in the context of whether they show promise of being efficacious.

Effectiveness: Tests promising interventions in a rigorous way under ideal, highly controlled conditions to determine the outcomes that result.

Effectiveness: If an intervention demonstrates positive outcomes in the highly controlled setting of a clinical trial, then the controls are relaxed to test the intervention in a “real-world” clinical setting during this stage of research.

Cost-Benefit and/or Public Policy: Once an intervention has been shown to be both efficacious and effective, research is often conducted to study the political and economic environment in which the intervention is best delivered.

The figure above illustrates a unique aspect of ASHA’s LOE system, which assesses a study within the context of the particular type of question it seeks to address. It makes little sense, for example, to conduct an extremely costly and time-consuming clinical trial when there is no preliminary evidence to suggest that the intervention being tested might actually work.

The LOE system uses a continuum of stages of research to provide this context (see definition of terms at right). This continuum represents a logical progression of research on a particular issue, although in reality it is not unusual to have simultaneous research projects taking place in different stages, and work being done in one stage when the preceding stage has not necessarily been completed. Figure 3 on page 24 can help to illustrate where the evidence is weak and strong, and can also point to the logical next research steps for a particular question.