Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses
• Used to critically evaluate the results of multiple similar studies. An exhaustive search of the literature is conducted. The systematic review is a narrative of the critical evaluation of the literature, whereas a meta-analysis provides a quantitative assessment of the pooled statistical results across all the studies. Any type of study can be used, however the gold standard is to use randomized controlled trials.

Randomized Controlled Trials
• The highest level of clinically based experimental research. Individuals who are diagnosed with a specific condition are randomized into treatment and control groups. Randomization usually ensures that the two groups are similar at baseline in regard to key outcome measures of interest. The treatment group receives the intervention while the control group receives the standard treatment or placebo.

Outcome Studies
• Used to track individuals with a pre-existing condition who receive a specific intervention. These individuals are tracked for a specified amount of time and results are reported in the form of clinical outcomes. Can also compare two groups (those that received the intervention and those who did not).

Prospective Cohort Studies (AKA Longitudinal Studies)
• Records baselines measurements of identified characteristics of interest in healthy individuals, and these individuals are measured over time. The purpose of the study is to find links between an identified characteristic of interest and the incidence of a particular condition. With regard to the characteristic of interest, the group who developed the condition can then be compared with the group who did not. The studies consist of a large sample size across many different centers.

Case-Controlled Studies
• Compare two groups (one with a condition of interest and the other being free of that condition) to identify specific differences between the two groups (e.g., the group with the condition had a hx of XXX whereas the group who did not have the condition did not have XXX in their background).

Cross-Sectional Studies
• Survey specific populations at a given point in time to determine the prevalence of a clinical risk factor, outcome, or phenomenon. For example, results from a survey to find out how often people are exercising.

Case Report/Case Series
• Published reports of clinical observation about one particular case study (case report) or the outcomes from a group of patients (case series). They are not experimental, only descriptive.

Editorials/Expert Opinion
• A published opinion/comment from someone who is an expert in the field.