

FIGURE 11 THE MEDICAL RESEARCH CYCLE



Results from any type of research can fuel the medical research cycle by providing observations relevant to the practice of medicine, which lead to questions, or hypotheses, that are tested in experiments during the discovery phase of research. During the discovery phase, traits unique to a disease may be uncovered, leading to the development of a potential therapeutic. Before entering clinical testing, potential therapeutics undergo preclinical testing to identify any toxicities and help determine initial dosing. The safety and efficacy of potential therapeutics are then tested in clinical trials. If an agent is safe and efficacious, and it is approved for use by the U.S. Food and Drug

Administration (FDA), it will enter clinical practice. Importantly, observations made during the routine use of a new therapeutic can feed back into the medical research cycle and further enhance the use of that agent or the development of others like it. If, however, a therapeutic is not safe or efficacious and fails to gain FDA approval, the observations from the clinical testing still feed back into the medical research cycle to spur future research efforts. Because the cycle is iterative, it is constantly building on prior knowledge, and research undertaken during any part of the cycle continually powers new observations.