

Maine Board of Examiners in Physical Therapy

In its report to the Maine Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research and Economic Development, the Maine Board of Examiners in Physical Therapy agreed that the practice of dry needling is within the scope of practice of a physical therapist.

The Board agreed that the practice of dry needling is inherent to the education and practice of physical therapy and is a benefit to patients who receive this treatment in conjunction with physical therapy services. Licensed physical therapists have a responsibility to ensure that they have sufficient clinical knowledge and understanding of the dry needling modality without the Board's governance.

To obtain a physical therapist license, an applicant must have completed the education and examination requirements in Maine law. It is a licensed physical therapist's obligation to recognize, determine and obtain education and experience prior to performing specialized modalities including dry needling.

In establishing this guideline, the Board strongly recommends that licensees assess their knowledge, abilities and skill levels prior to performing dry needling. Licensees should determine whether it is necessary for them to obtain post-graduate education, knowledge and training in the following areas before engaging in any specialized treatment modality, including dry needling:

- Development of psychomotor skills to safely handle needles and palpate tissues;
- Anatomical review for safety and effectiveness;
- Indications and contraindications, precautions and possible adverse outcomes, and compliance with adverse event guidelines;
- Evidence-based instruction on the theory of dry needling practice;
- Current dry needling techniques and accurate point selection;
- Sterile needle procedures, including the standards of one of the following:
 - U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; or
 - U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration;
- Safe use of dry needles and skin penetration, including waste disposal of needles and management of blood and bodily fluids;
- Accurate positioning of the patient and the education of the patient regarding the amount of movement allowed while needles are inserted;
- Supervision and monitoring of the patient during treatment;
- Communication with the patient, including informed consent, treatment and expected outcome, and patient compliance with treatment requirements;
- Documentation and records describing the dry needling procedure and informed consent, where applicable; and
- Management of dry needling equipment and supplies.

The Board recognizes that licensees currently performing dry needling have developed expertise in the practice modality and are, therefore, not required to obtain additional education or training, unless the licensee chooses to do so. Dry needling may not be delegated by a licensed physical therapist to a licensed physical therapist assistant.