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Combined Sections Meeting
February 17-20, 2010
San Diego, California

PT 2010
June 16-19, 2010
Boston, Massachusetts

February 23, 2010

Board of Physical Therapists and Athletic Trainers
Cannon Building, Suite 203
861 Silver Lake Blvd.
Dover, DE 19904

Dear Members of the Board:

This letter is to provide information regarding the use of dry needling by licensed physical therapists. It is my understanding that there is some question as to whether dry needling is part of the physical therapist scope of practice and if its use by physical therapists is appropriate.

Dry needling is an intervention that is being utilized by physical therapists across the country. *The Guide to Physical Therapist Practice*, which defines much of the scope of practice of the physical therapist profession, lists numerous methods, techniques and procedural interventions a physical therapist may utilize to produce a change consistent with their diagnosis. Manual therapy techniques are designed to improve muscle function, induce relaxation and decrease pain. The intent of dry needling is compatible with this component of physical therapist practice. The procedural intervention of dry needling is therefore not inconsistent with *The Guide to Physical Therapist Practice*.

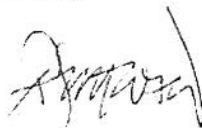
Physical therapists are bound by their license to practice safely and effectively. APTA believes that it is not inappropriate for licensed physical therapists to perform dry needling so long as they are competent in the use of the intervention

At the state level, a number of state boards of physical therapy have recognized dry needling as being within the legal scope of practice, including: Alabama, Colorado, Maryland, Georgia, New Mexico, New Hampshire, South Carolina, and Virginia. Physical therapists who utilize dry needling in these states do not refer to the technique as acupuncture or hold themselves out the public as practicing acupuncture.

I understand that there is some questions related the possible overlap of this modality with those techniques used in the practice of acupuncture. Dry needling by physical therapists is a manual therapy intervention that involves the use of needles. The utilization of needles (a tool) is the primary similarity between dry needling and acupuncture. The objectives and philosophy behind the use of dry needling by physical therapists are not to control and regulate the flow and balance of energy and is not based on Eastern and metaphysical concepts.

I hope this information is helpful. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



R. Scott Ward, PT, PhD
President, American Physical Therapy Association