

Board of Physical Therapy

Guidance on Dry Needling in the Practice of Physical Therapy

Upon recommendation from the Task Force on Dry Needling, the Board voted that dry needling is within the scope of practice of physical therapy but should only be practiced under the following conditions:

- Dry needling is not an entry level skill but an advanced procedure that requires additional training.
- A physical therapist using dry needling must complete at least 54 hours of post professional training including providing evidence of meeting expected competencies that include demonstration of cognitive and psychomotor knowledge and skills.
- The licensed physical therapist bears the burden of proof of sufficient education and training to ensure competence with the treatment or intervention.
- Dry needling is an invasive procedure and, in accordance with § 54.1-3482 of the Code of Virginia, requires physician referral and direction specific for dry needling. Physician referral should be in writing and specific for dry needling; if the initial referral is received orally, it must be followed up with a written referral.
- If dry needling is performed, a separate procedure note for each treatment is required, and notes must indicate how the patient tolerated the technique as well as the outcome after the procedure.
- A patient consent form should be utilized and should clearly state that the patient is not receiving acupuncture. The consent form should include the risks and benefits of the technique, and the patient should receive a copy of the consent form. The consent form should contain the following explanation:

Dry needling is a technique used in physical therapy practice to treat trigger points in muscles. You should understand that this dry needling technique should not be confused with a complete acupuncture treatment performed by a licensed acupuncturist. A complete acupuncture treatment might yield a holistic benefit not available through a limited dry needling treatment.