

# COLLEGE OF PHYSICAL THERAPISTS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

## PRACTICE STANDARD

**Number 10**

**Effective: April 1, 2008**

Replaces: **Acupuncture and IMS**

September 1, 2006

September 12, 2002

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### DRY NEEDLING FOR PHYSICAL THERAPISTS

#### Definitions

**Dry needling and dry needles** are generic terms. In day to day language and in some jurisdictions, the terms acupuncture and acupuncture needles are used rather than the term dry needles. Dry needling refers to the use of fine gauge, dry needles that are inserted into the body at specific points selected according to the needs of the patient. Dry needles are solid, thin needles that have no ability to inject or withdraw fluid.

The terms **dry needling technique** and **use of dry needles** can describe a variety of approaches. Physical therapists may use a classical, neuro-anatomical or intramuscular stimulation approach to dry needling or a combination of these approaches.

#### Educational qualifications

A registrant may use dry needles, within the physical therapy scope of practice and within the physical therapist's competence, if he or she has successfully completed a program listed in Schedule G of the College Bylaws including associated examinations and internship.

#### Standards of Practice

The physical therapist must:

1. Obtain informed patient consent prior to using dry needling techniques.
2. Adhere to Minimal Treatment Standards Bylaw.
3. Adhere to World Health Organization standard precautions ([www.wpro.who.int/sars/docs/practicalguidelines/dec2004/chapter3.pdf](http://www.wpro.who.int/sars/docs/practicalguidelines/dec2004/chapter3.pdf)) and current BC Centre for Disease Control infection control procedures ([www.bccdc.org/content.php?item=194](http://www.bccdc.org/content.php?item=194)).
4. Use clean dry needling techniques which include infection control procedures and involve the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to:
  - wash hands
  - use personal precautions as appropriate (e.g. hepatitis vaccination, gloves, mask, eye shield)
  - safely store needles
  - use sterile plungers and single-use needles

- prepare the patient's skin as appropriate (e.g. wash skin, swab with alcohol)
  - use special preparations for intra-articular use (e.g. use of betadine, tetrachlorahexadine)
  - dispose of needles and contaminated materials appropriately (e.g. tamper-proof disposal containers)
  - avoid contact with the shaft of the needle
  - minimize the needle contact with the patient's skin
  - use proper techniques to re-sheath the needle (e.g. put the handle end in the tube first)
  - ensure resources for the removal of broken needles are readily available (e.g. needle removers/pliers)
  - clean or sterilize equipment (e.g. plungers, clips, eye shields) appropriately (e.g. using an autoclave)
  - have cotton tips/swabs available for removing needles as necessary (e.g. in case of bleeding)
5. Use safe dry needling practices which includes knowledge, skills and abilities in:
- surface and underlying anatomy
  - the safe handling of needles
  - accurate and appropriate point selection
  - the positioning of needles at the appropriate depth and in the appropriate direction
  - the handling and positioning of the patient
  - the appropriate positioning of the patient and the education of the patient regarding the appropriate amount of movement while needles are inserted
  - supervision and monitoring of the patient during treatment
  - communication with the patient
  - the obtaining of informed consent
  - appropriate patient selection
  - self- assessment of the capacity to provide treatment
  - the creation of a physical environment that ensures the safety and comfort of both patient and physical therapist

## SCHEDULE G

### Approved Dry Needling Programs

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- (1) the Level 1 (Parts 1, 2A, and 3A) of the Acupuncture Foundation Canada Institute; or
- (2) the University of Alberta, Faculty Extension's Certificate Program in Medical Acupuncture; or
- (3) the Intramuscular Stimulation program at the Institute for the Study and Treatment of Pain (ISTOP); or
- (4) McMaster University Contemporary Acupuncture for Health Professionals Program; or
- (5) Manitoba based Acupuncture for Physiotherapists: The Art and Science; or
- (6) The International College of Traditional Chinese Medicine of Vancouver courses 100, 101, 103, 212 AB, 213, 306; or the Certificate for Health Professionals Levels I-IV; or
- (7) a program of academic education or combination of academic education and practical experience approved by the Registration Committee and equivalent to the programs in subsections (1) to (6).

Additional Resources:

College of Physical Therapists of Alberta. Dry needling competency profile for physical therapists. (2007). CPTA website [cited 2007 Oct 11]; Available from: URL: [www.cpta.ab.ca](http://www.cpta.ab.ca).

College of Physical Therapists of Alberta. Position statement - use of needles. Alberta: College of Physical Therapists of Alberta; 2005.

For information on infection control visit the BC Centre for Disease Control website at [www.bccdc.org/content.php?item=194](http://www.bccdc.org/content.php?item=194) or the Public Health Agency of Canada website at [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/dpg\\_e.html#infection](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/dpg_e.html#infection).

For information on informed consent see the *Health Care (Consent) and Care Facility (Admission) Act* at [www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/H/96181\\_01.htm](http://www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/H/96181_01.htm) and the *Infant's Act* at [www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/I/96223\\_01.htm](http://www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/I/96223_01.htm).

For information on Standard Precautions see the World Health Organization website at [www.wpro.who.int/sars/docs/practicalguidelines/dec2004/chapter3.pdf](http://www.wpro.who.int/sars/docs/practicalguidelines/dec2004/chapter3.pdf).

World Health Organization. Guidelines on basic training and safety in acupuncture. WHO website [cited 2007 Dec 18]; Available from: URL: [http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/1999/WHO\\_EDM\\_TRM\\_99.1.pdf](http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/1999/WHO_EDM_TRM_99.1.pdf).

Acknowledgement:

The College gratefully acknowledges the College of Physical Therapists of Alberta for the Practice Standard content on definitions, clean dry needling techniques, and safe dry needling practices which appears as per the *Dry Needling Competency Profile for Physical Therapists*, published by the College of Physical Therapists of Alberta (2007).