



HEALTH PROFESSIONS LICENSING AUTHORITY GUIDELINES

TITLE: The Practice of Dry Needling and Acupuncture

EFFECTIVE DATE: May 2009

NEXT REVIEW DATE: May 2011

BOARD: Physiotherapists Board of the Northern Territory

Background

The Physiotherapists Board of the Northern Territory (the Board) acknowledges that physiotherapists may utilise techniques involving dry needling or acupuncture for the treatment of pain and other symptoms of musculoskeletal, neurological and cardio-respiratory disorders, or as a measure to improve functional health status.

The Board is charged with the responsibility of protecting the health and safety of the public by ensuring that physiotherapists are competent to practise in the disciplines that they are legally engaged. Techniques involving dry needling and acupuncture are not universally included within physiotherapy entry level training in Australia therefore the physiotherapist must undertake further education to develop competence in this area.

The following are a guide for registered physiotherapists who have been endorsed to engage in the practice of dry needling and acupuncture.

Other Supporting Documentation

Please also read the Board's "**Guidelines for Professional Conduct**" in conjunction with this Guideline.

Guidelines

The practice of physiotherapy in the Northern Territory is regulated by the *Health Practitioners Act 2004*.

Physiotherapists who utilise practices involving dry needling or acupuncture must have undertaken appropriate training and limit their practices to the management of generally accepted physical disorders within their scope of practice.

The Board expects that any physiotherapist who practices dry needling will adhere to the safe practices as set by the *Australian Society of Acupuncture Physiotherapists Inc.*, these include:

1. Physiotherapists should confine their use of acupuncture to treatment of conditions within the scope of practice of physiotherapy for which they have training and experience. Physiotherapists should practice acupuncture with respect to the level of training they have received and should attend further training if they wish to extend the use of acupuncture within their practice. This is particularly pertinent for any needling in the trunk, thorax or cervical regions.
2. Physiotherapists should only implement needle insertion techniques after attending a recognised training course.
3. Physiotherapists must comply with the current legislation of any local, state or federal governing bodies (eg. Local, state or federal governments and state registration boards).
4. Physiotherapists should keep clearly documented records describing the acupuncture procedure. Warnings given and informed consent should be noted. For consent of a child less than 16 years of

age a parents or guardians consent should be gained. It may be pertinent to document both the parents and the child's consent, especially if the child is in the 14 to 16 year age group.

5. Warnings and consent should include contraindications and precautions and possible adverse outcomes. Verbal consent is usually sufficient but in some cases it may be pertinent to gain written consent.
6. Physiotherapists should comply with the management of needle accidents and adverse reactions guidelines as outlined in the training completed.
7. Physiotherapists should comply with the hygiene requirements as outlined in the *Australian Society of Acupuncture Physiotherapists Inc Guide* (available on www.combinedhealth.com.au) and should be aware of any further hygiene requirements of employers (eg. Hospital department guidelines).
8. Physiotherapists should comply with the waste disposal guidelines for needles or bodily fluids as outlined in this guide. Physiotherapists should be aware of additional requirements for waste disposal of needles or bodily fluids as set by local governing bodies.
9. Physiotherapists should recognize and comply with the safety guidelines for moxibustion, cupping/spooning and the application of auricular needles, press needles and beads as outlined again in the *Australian Society of Acupuncture Physiotherapists Inc Guide* (available on www.combinedhealth.com.au)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

1. Combined Health – Musculoskeletal Acupuncture and Dry Needling
<http://www.combinedhealth.com.au/home>
2. Australian Physiotherapy Association “Skin Penetration Position Statement”
www.physiotherapy.asn.au

**All forms and any other updated information regarding Physiotherapy registration can be found on the Physiotherapists Board of the Northern Territory's website www.nt.gov.au/health/registrationboards