

Position Statement- North Carolina Board of Physical Therapy Examiners

21. NCBPTE Position Statement on Dry Needling

Adopted – Sept. 12, 2023

Reviewed – June 5, 2024

The Board continues to regularly respond to questions concerning the physical therapy practice of dry needling in NC. At the time of the development of this position statement, four different dry needling scope of practice questions are addressed on the Board website. These include the questions of whether perineural and connective tissue dry needling are within the scope of practice, hours of training required to perform dry needling, and the use of musculoskeletal ultrasound to guide needle placement when performing dry needling. In response to public questions concerning dry needling, the Board also defined “advanced training.”

In previous responses to scope of practice questions surrounding dry needling, the Board referenced dry needling as defined in the [2016 NCBPTE Declaratory Ruling](#) (20-21) and subsequently in the NC [Supreme Court Case brought by the Acupuncture Board](#) (8). In both references, dry needling is defined as “a treatment that uses physical or rehabilitative procedures, with assistive devices, for the purpose of correcting or alleviating myofascial pain, a physical disability.” Therefore, any utilization of dry needling techniques that satisfy the foregoing language is within the scope of physical therapy practice in NC. At its Board meeting on March 9, 2022, the Board determined that perineural dry needling extends beyond the current definition of dry needling thereby is not within the scope of physical therapy practice in NC.

Moreover, the Board previously determined that dry needling, while within the scope of practice of physical therapists in NC, is an advanced skill which requires “[advanced training](#)” as defined on the Board website. After careful review of the literature, discussion with subject matter experts which includes but is not limited to regulators in other jurisdictions and physical therapists who practice dry needling, review of FSBPT and APTA dry needling resources, consultation with educational institutions, and research of dry needling certification requirements from course providers referenced in the *FSBPT Resource Paper Regarding Dry Needling 11th Edition*, December 2021, the NCBPTE strongly encourages the following principles be satisfied for the practice of dry needling by physical therapists in NC.

- Prior to introducing dry needling into a personal scope of practice, the physical therapist should attest to having attained the knowledge, skill, ability, and competence to perform dry needling.
- Prior to administering dry needling, the physical therapist should communicate the plan of care and obtain informed consent from the patient/client or their legally authorized representative.
- All physical therapists engaging in the practice of dry needling should acquire the appropriate “advanced training” as defined below.
- All physical therapists engaging in the practice of dry needling should retain documentation as proof of successful completion of “advanced training.”
- A physical therapist should not delegate any portion of the dry needling treatment/intervention to a physical therapist assistant or physical therapy aide.

- Student physical therapists do not meet the Board's definition of "advanced training" therefore should not engage in the practice of dry needling, regardless of the level of supervision from the supervising physical therapist.

NCBPTE Recommended Advanced Training

- Completion of at least 1 year of licensed practice as a physical therapist.

-AND-

- Completion of a formalized course of study on the topic of dry needling from an approved provider in accordance with 21 NCAC 48G .0105-.0112. The course of study should include:
 - A minimum of 50 hours of in-person (not online) instruction which includes at least 50% of the course study spent on practical, clinical application.
 - Certification of completion of all program requirements.

-OR-

- Formal education, training, and mentorship that is equivalent to the above.

Resources:

- [2016 NCBPTE Declaratory Ruling for Dry Needling](#)
- [2018 NC Acupuncture Licensing Board vs NC Board of Physical Therapy Examiners Supreme Court Case/ Decision](#)
- [FSBPT HumRRO Dry Needling Competencies Review: Report Memo 2020](#)
- [FSBPT Resource Paper Regarding Dry Needling 11th Edition](#)

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