

Position Statement – North Carolina Board of Physical Therapy Examiners

9. Use and Storage of Medications for Iontophoresis and Phonophoresis

Adopted – September, 23, 2005 and October 12, 2005

Reviewed – September 23, 2010, June 17, 2015, June 6, 2018, September 2, 2020, June 8, 2022

Revised – June 27, 2024

As a result of changes in federal law, pharmacies are now prohibited from compounding drug products for “office use.” The purchase of a drug product other than for an individual patient prescription is considered a wholesale transaction by the Food and Drug Safety Division of the NC Department of Agriculture unless that pharmacy is licensed as a prescription drug wholesaler.

Physical therapists use commercial or compounded products with Phonophoresis and Iontophoresis treatments. The most common drugs used in these procedures are dexamethasone and hydrocortisone.

Based on the changes in federal law and response from the NC Board of Pharmacy, when physical therapy licensees incorporate iontophoresis or phonophoresis in the treatment, the NC Physical Therapy Board encourages licensees to consider the following:

- All patients who receive iontophoresis or phonophoresis with prescription medications by a physical therapist or physical therapist assistant must have a signed individual prescription or written protocol from a physician that indicates specific dosages. A “blanket order” for iontophoresis or phonophoresis is not sufficient. Physical therapy direct access does not allow a physical therapist to administer prescription medications without a physician’s order.
- The physical therapy practice should maintain accurate records of all patients who receive iontophoresis and phonophoresis that includes the name of the patient, date of treatment, referring physician, type of treatment, and specific dosage of medications.
- The physical therapist may store iontophoresis and phonophoresis prescription medications for use on the individual patient who received the written prescription; however, all expired medications should be properly discarded in a timely manner.

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