

Submitter: Gryffin Kearns
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3824

Members of the Senate Committee on Health Care,

My name is Gryffin Kearns. I am from Portland, and I am writing in opposition to HB 3824, specifically the inclusion of “needle insertion” (Page 3, Line 37) in the physical therapy scope of practice. The term refers to dry needling, a technique that uses acupuncture needles to penetrate the skin and stimulate muscle or nerve tissue functionally equivalent to acupuncture, as defined in Oregon law. The inclusion of needle insertion would not stop there however, but could include needles involving medications and other substances for which physical therapists are not trained, nor should they be. When I google physical therapy, I see that it is acknowledged as the treatment of disease, injury or deformity by physical methods such as massage, heat treatment and exercise, rather, and specifically rather than by drugs or surgery. We do not need physical therapists pretending to be medical doctors, surgeons or acupuncturists, but to perform the service for which they originated and were trained, which is a valuable and necessary service in our healthcare system that people already have trouble accessing in a timely manner. Please do not further load their plates.

As a healthcare consumer committed to patient safety, I am deeply concerned about the increasing attempted use of dry needling by individuals without adequate training. I am also frustrated that it is not called by proper name, which is acupuncture. This feels disingenuous and shady. Dry needling is acupuncture and should be performed by acupuncturists with proper training. Needle based procedures are not inherently benign but they require a high degree of precision, clinical judgment, and a thorough understanding of human anatomy. When performed incorrectly, dry needling can result in serious complications such as pneumothorax, nerve damage, or vascular injury. Several studies indicate that when needling is performed by non licensed acupuncturists such as PTs and chiropractors, patient injury rates more than double. Severe injuries are more than nine times greater.

Dry needling often involves inserting needles into muscles, joints, and anatomical compartments that are in close proximity to vital structures like the lungs, major blood vessels, and nerves. The margin for error is small. This is why licensed acupuncturists undergo over 2,500 hours of rigorous training that includes live, layered, three dimensional anatomy, needling safety, and clinical practice. This education ensures that they possess the skills and knowledge necessary to perform these procedures safely, unlike that of physical therapists and chiropractors. All acupuncture schools teach medical sciences in both Western and Eastern

terminology. The suggestion that acupuncturists only deal in meridians, channels and qi is so ill informed it borders racism. Acupuncture points are located in joints, muscles and other tissue layers which are all called by Western name and have intentions based in neuro-anatomy, muscle skeletal anatomy, the neuro-endocrine system, the cardiovascular system, etc.

Allowing individuals with significantly less training to perform such invasive techniques undermines the standard of care and exposes patients to unnecessary risk. Patient safety must remain our top priority. We should not lower the bar for invasive procedures that, when improperly performed, have the potential for life-altering harm.

I have been to see a physical therapist on multiple occasions and would never choose one to insert needles into me, needles of any sort, whether acupuncture, vaccination or other injections. Health care consumers need physical therapists to do the jobs that they trained for, such as body mechanic evaluation and movement enhancement. We have properly trained acupuncturists to perform acupuncture. Please keep the public safe.

Regards,

Gryffin Kearns