

Subject: Opposition to 'needle insertion' by physical therapists, HB 3824

Dear Chair and Members of the Senate Health Care Committee,

As a licensed acupuncturist practicing in Oregon for over 20 years, I am strongly opposed to House Bill 3824, which authorizes physical therapists to perform 'needle insertion' (Page 3, Line 37), also referred to as 'dry needling'.

The Oregon Medical Board has ruled that dry needling is a form of acupuncture, which requires a medical license to perform. Acupuncturists are required to undergo extensive training (over 2,500 hours) and specialized education, which includes over 700 hours of direct clinical supervision. Dry needling is fundamentally an acupuncture technique or modality that uses acupuncture needles to penetrate the skin to stimulate muscle tissue, trigger points or nerve tissue. Courses in dry needling do not provide the depth of knowledge needed to safely perform needling techniques, putting patient safety at risk. Performing dry needling is fundamentally no different than practicing an orthopedic style of acupuncture, which uses the same equipment and is not within the scope of practice for physical therapists (PTs).

Oversight and patient safety

Acupuncture is considered a medical treatment. ORS 677.759 states, 'No person shall practice acupuncture without first obtaining a license to practice medicine and surgery or a license to practice acupuncture from the Oregon Medical Board...' and anyone who is not appropriately licensed is considered to be performing an unauthorized practice of medicine and subject to penalties. In order for PTs to safely perform dry needling on patients, acupuncture licensure should continue to be a minimum requirement. As written, HB 3824 undermines efforts by the Acupuncture Advisory Committee that has set standards for scope of practice, education and licensure in order to protect the public. Allowing PTs to perform dry needling puts patients at risk due to lack of oversight from the Oregon Medical Board.

Impact to the profession

In addition to patient safety, 'needle insertion' (dry needling), if performed by undertrained and underskilled PTs, puts the acupuncture profession at risk. PTs adding dry needling with minimal training standards will have a negative effect on the reputation of acupuncture and the acupuncture profession as a whole.

Thank you for your time and consideration.