

American Society of Hand Therapists
A statement on the Use of Dry Needling in Hand Therapy
September 2016

Disclaimer

The American Society of Hand Therapists assumes no responsibility for the practice or recommendations of any member or other practitioner, or for the policies and procedures of any practice setting. The therapist functions within the limitations of licensure, state practice act and/or institutional policy.

Definition

Dry needling is one treatment modality that is only *part* of a comprehensive treatment program. Dry needling is a skilled intervention that is carried out by therapists (where allowed by state law) who have advanced training and certification in its use. The dry needling technique uses a 'dry' thin needle (with no medication) to penetrate into or through the skin and stimulate underlying myofascial trigger points, muscular tissues and connective tissues. Dry needling is used to treat various impairments including, but not limited to: scarring, myofascial pain, motor recruitment and muscle firing problems. Goals for treatment vary from pain relief, increased extensibility of scar tissue to the improvement of neuromuscular firing patterns (FSBPT). □

Dry needling may also be referred to as trigger point dry needling, intramuscular stimulation and intramuscular manual therapy.

Dry needling is distinct and different than acupuncture. The distinction is that acupuncture is an entire discipline and profession where as dry needling is merely one technique, which should be available to any professional with the appropriate background and training (FSBPT). Acupuncture is a practice based on traditional Chinese medicine and performed by acupuncturists. Dry needling is considered a part of modern Western medicine principles (Cummings).

ASHT Position

ASHT does not have a formal position on dry needling at this time. The current body of evidence neither supports nor refutes the use of dry needling in the practice management of the hand and upper extremity. Each state is independent to determine its own laws and rules, board opinions and actions, which have varied widely around dry needling. This has created inconsistent requirements for physical and occupational therapists seeking guidance to use dry needling within their scope of practice. To date there are no known national credentialing standards to govern the competencies of those teaching and those taking dry needling courses.

References

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