

4.6 Acupuncture and Dry Needle Therapy

Purpose:

This Practice Direction provides direction to physiotherapists for the safe, competent, and ethical practice of acupuncture and dry needling therapy for the management or relief of pain.

Definitions:

The terms “acupuncture”, “dry needling therapy”, and “use of dry needles” can describe a variety of treatment techniques that use solid filament (acupuncture) needles to puncture the skin for therapeutic purposes. These techniques include a range of approaches, such as acupuncture, electro-acupuncture, trigger point needling, intramuscular stimulation or similar treatments used by numerous health care professions.

Acupuncture refers to the stimulation of certain points on the body by the insertion of needles for the purpose of pain management or relief. It involves inserting acupuncture needles at particular body points based on anatomical location, Traditional Chinese Medicine, and/or neurophysiological principles.

Dry needling therapy refers to the stimulation of contracted muscle tissue, adherent scars, or fascia by the insertion of acupuncture needles for the purpose of pain management or relief.

Practice:

Physiotherapists will:

- Discuss all possible options for treatment with the patient¹.
- Disclose any additional fees associated with any treatment modalities prior to the application of the treatment.
- Acknowledge that patients may decline acupuncture or dry needling therapy.

¹ The term patient can be interchanged with the term client. “Clients are recipients of physiotherapy services, and may be individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, or populations. An individual client may also be referred to as a patient. In some circumstances clients/patients may be represented by their substitute decision-makers.”

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- Not attempt to persuade, coerce, or intimidate patients into accepting a particular treatment or course of treatment.
- Establish and document that the patient may be an appropriate candidate for acupuncture or dry needling therapy.
- Ensure and document that patients have the information and skills needed to be active participants in their own care during and/or after the technique, including an understanding of the proper management of side effects or adverse events.
- Written informed consent must be obtained for the initial treatment and each treatment that involves new techniques or new anatomical areas of therapy.
- Ensure no part of acupuncture or dry needling is delegated with the exception of to a physiotherapist on the CPM Acupuncture Roster. The physiotherapist needs to be able to account for all the needles inserted/used as well as assessing the patient's treatment response.
- Have a written plan in place and be prepared to manage any harmful incidents or adverse events during treatment. Refer to the Patient Safety Incident Resource for more information on writing safety incident plans and the components to include.
- Disclose potential side effects and adverse events to the patient including those that may occur during and/or after the treatment and describe the proper management of these side effects or adverse events. Physiotherapists must provide enough information so that the patient or their caregivers are prepared and able to respond if issues arise after/outside the treatment setting.

Acupuncture Educational Requirements:

Physiotherapists performing acupuncture must have successfully completed a program that meets the following criteria:

Curriculum:

- Minimum of 100 hours of instructor interaction and evaluation which should include theoretical and practical components;
- Course content must include, but is not limited to:
 - theoretical and practical basis of acupuncture;
 - indications/contraindications/precautions;
 - application of acupuncture as an aspect of physiotherapy practice;
 - detailed human anatomy including potential anomalies which could compromise safe needle insertion and removal. Specifically, there must be instruction in regional anatomy including potential anatomical anomalies in the neck and thorax;

- discussion on consent and patient information on side effects and adverse reactions;
- explicit instruction must be provided as part of the course work in the recognition, assessment, and management of all potential side effects and adverse events, including equipment required in the clinical setting. These strategies must include planning and preparing for the physiotherapist to manage adverse reactions, advice for patients if adverse events occur away from the clinic, requisite on-site equipment and potential need for transportation of patient to an emergency medical facility;
- hand-on practice of point location and relevant anatomy needling technique;
- patient safety and infection control;
- objective evaluation of the physiotherapist's competency with the points demonstrated and used during the course included in the program. There must be both a written and a practical evaluation as part of the program.

Principle Instructor:

The principle instructor must meet the following requirements:

- Have their name on or be eligible to be on the CPM Acupuncture Roster;
- Have a minimum of five (5) years of acupuncture experience following certification;
- Have demonstrated ongoing continuing education and professional development in the field; and
- Have previous experience participating in an acupuncture course, e.g., as a lab demonstrator or teaching assistant.

Examination:

- A formal written and practical examination must be successfully completed to determine level of competency;
- An external examiner (not involved in teaching the course) must be involved in the examination process, either alone or in conjunction with other instructors/examiners. The external examiner must meet the same qualification requirements as outlined for the principle instructor.

Dry Needling Therapy Requirements:

Physiotherapists wishing to offer dry needling therapy techniques must have specific instruction in this technique in addition to their basic acupuncture education and must be on the CPM Acupuncture Roster.

The College of Physiotherapists of Manitoba (CPM) requires that all members practice within their individual knowledge, skills, and abilities. Physiotherapists are expected to show judgement in their practice which protects public safety and professional standards.

Competency:

- Only physiotherapists who have met the CPM requirements to practice acupuncture and dry needling therapy may do so.
- Members are expected to maintain ongoing competence.
- The Continuing Competency program may require members to demonstrate evidence of ongoing competency when participating in clinical audits.

Registration with CPM:

Acupuncture is a rostered activity in Manitoba.

All physiotherapists who wish to perform acupuncture as part of their physiotherapy practice in Manitoba must:

- be registered with the CPM on the Full Active register;
- submit evidence to the College of having met the educational criteria outlined in this Practice Direction.
- only start practicing Acupuncture in Manitoba once their name has been placed on the roster and have received written confirmation from the College.
- not delegate any aspect of these techniques to anyone who is not on the CPM Acupuncture Roster.
- maintain their competency and participate in the Continuing competency Program as required.

It is the member's responsibility to provide all documentation to the College, as well as to maintain their professional competency, credentials and current registration.

Dry Needling: All physiotherapists who wish to perform dry needling as part of their physiotherapy practice in Manitoba must have met the requirements and have their name entered on the Acupuncture roster.