

# COLLEGE OF PHYSICAL THERAPISTS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

## PRACTICE STANDARD

**Number 10**

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Replaces: April 1, 2013  
April 1, 2008  
September 1, 2006  
September 12, 2002  
May 1996  
January 1995

### ACUPUNCTURE AND DRY NEEDLING FOR PHYSICAL THERAPISTS

#### Definitions

**Acupuncture** refers to the use of fine gauge, dry needles that are inserted into the body at specific points selected as determined by meridian and chi theory. **Dry needling** refers to the use of fine gauge, dry needles that are inserted into the body at specific points based upon segmentally myofascial, trigger points theory. Dry needles are solid, thin needles that have no ability to inject or withdraw fluid.

The terms **acupuncture**, **dry needling technique** and **use of dry needles** can describe a variety of approaches. Physical therapists may use a classical, neuro-anatomical or intramuscular stimulation approach, or a combination of these approaches, to acupuncture and dry needling.

#### Educational qualifications

A registrant may use acupuncture or dry needles, within the physical therapy scope of practice and within the physical therapist's competence, if he or she has successfully completed a program including associated examinations (both theoretical and practical). Practicing acupuncture or dry needling techniques on patients is not permitted until the physical therapist has demonstrated competency through successful completion of the approved course and has sent proof of their educational qualifications to the College.

#### Standards of Practice

The physical therapist must:

1. Obtain informed patient consent prior to using acupuncture or dry needling techniques.
2. Adhere to Minimal Treatment Standards Bylaw.
3. Adhere to World Health Organization standard precautions ([www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/EPR\\_AM2\\_E7.pdf](http://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/EPR_AM2_E7.pdf)) and current BC Centre for Disease Control infection control procedures [www.bccdc.ca](http://www.bccdc.ca)

4. Use safe acupuncture or dry needling practices which includes knowledge, skills and abilities in:

- surface and underlying anatomy
- the safe handling of needles
- accurate and appropriate point selection
- the positioning of needles at the appropriate depth and in the appropriate direction
- the handling and positioning of the patient
- the appropriate positioning of the patient and the education of the patient regarding the appropriate amount of movement while needles are inserted
- supervision and monitoring of the patient during treatment
- communication with the patient
- the obtaining of informed consent
- appropriate patient selection
- self- assessment of the capacity to provide treatment
- the creation of a physical environment that ensures the safety and comfort of both patient and physical therapist

#### Additional Resources:

College of Physical Therapists of Alberta. Dry needling competency profile for physical therapists. (2007). CPTA website [cited 2007 Oct 11]; Available from [www.physiotherapyalberta.ca](http://www.physiotherapyalberta.ca)

College of Physical Therapists of Alberta. Position statement - use of needles. Alberta: College of Physical Therapists of Alberta; 2005.

For information on infection control visit the BC Centre for Disease Control website at [www.bccdc.ca/dis-cond/comm-manual/CDManualChap3.htm](http://www.bccdc.ca/dis-cond/comm-manual/CDManualChap3.htm) or the Public Health Agency of Canada website at [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/dpg\\_e.html#infection](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/dpg_e.html#infection). This link goes directly to infection control document: [www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071115105916/http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/ccdr-rmtc/98pdf/cdr24s8e.pdf](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071115105916/http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/ccdr-rmtc/98pdf/cdr24s8e.pdf)

For information on informed consent see the *Health Care (Consent) and Care Facility (Admission) Act* at [www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws\\_new/document/ID/freeside/00\\_96181\\_01](http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/00_96181_01) and the *Infant's Act* at [www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws\\_new/document/ID/freeside/00\\_96223\\_01](http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/00_96223_01)

For information on Standard Precautions see the World Health Organization website at [www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/EPR\\_AM2\\_E7.pdf](http://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/EPR_AM2_E7.pdf)

World Health Organization. Guidelines on basic training and safety in acupuncture. WHO website [cited 2007 Dec 18]; Available from [whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/1999/WHO\\_EDM\\_TRM\\_99.1.pdf](http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/1999/WHO_EDM_TRM_99.1.pdf)

#### Acknowledgement:

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