

ACUPUNCTURE

S T A N D A R D

Preamble

The Nova Scotia College of Physiotherapists regulates the practice of physiotherapy¹ in Nova Scotia through the administration of the *Physiotherapy Act* and regulations.

The College acknowledges that Acupuncture is within the scope of physiotherapy practice. This standard applies to acupuncture, dry needling, intra muscular stimulation, and other similar or related modalities.

Definitions (For the purposes of this Practice Standard):

Acupuncture involves the insertion of solid filiform acupuncture needles into the skin at specific points on the body to achieve a therapeutic effect.

Intramuscular Stimulation (IMS) or Dry Needle Therapy is the stimulation of contracted muscle tissue by the insertion of acupuncture needles to achieve a therapeutic effect based on neurophysiological principles. It is a total system that can be used for the diagnosis and treatment of myofascial pain syndromes.

Legislative Authority

Section 2(r)(vii) states that "physiotherapy" or "physical therapy" means the application of professional physiotherapy knowledge, skills and judgement by a physiotherapist to obtain, regain or maintain optimal health and functional performance and includes, but is not limited to, pain relief, including invasive acupuncture.

Competency

Physiotherapists performing acupuncture must have successfully completed a post-graduate training program that meets the following criteria:

1. The acupuncture program includes theoretical and practical instruction.
2. The program provides participants with the knowledge base and clinical skills necessary to apply acupuncture techniques safely and competently, and with methods for dealing with emergency situations should they arise.
3. The program evaluates the physiotherapist's competency with the points demonstrated and used during the course. ***Physiotherapists shall only use acupuncture points and procedures in accordance with the level of training successfully completed.***

¹ The terms physical therapist, physiotherapist, physiotherapy, physiotherapy, and, PT are protected terms used with permission. The terms physical therapist and physical therapy are synonyms for physiotherapist and physiotherapy respectively.

ACUPUNCTURE Cont'd

Infection Prevention and Control

Acupuncture is a procedure performed on tissue under the dermis.

Single-use, sterile, disposable needles shall be used.

Sterile guide tubes are for single patient use only and must be disposed of immediately following treatment.

The acupuncture needle shaft must be maintained in a clean state throughout the procedure. **If the needle shaft is contaminated by contact with another object or surface then the needle shall not be used.**

Needle manipulation must be performed without the physiotherapist's hands coming into contact with the needle shaft.

Bare fingers must not be used to press down at the insertion site when the needle is withdrawn.

If re-usable plunger type applicators are used, the applicator shall be sterilized after use with each client. Sterilization shall be in accordance with federal and provincial guidelines.

Physiotherapists shall explain the procedure used to sterilize re-usable plungers before obtaining consent.

Used needles shall be placed in a puncture-resistant sharps container and disposed of by a company that handles medical waste.

Informed Consent

Informed **written consent** is recommended.

Acupuncture Tasks **Shall Not be Assigned**

A physiotherapist trained in acupuncture must be readily available to the client receiving acupuncture throughout the treatment.

Acupuncture needles shall only be inserted by a qualified physiotherapist.

Acupuncture needles shall only be removed by a qualified physiotherapist.

Acupuncture tasks shall not be assigned to or carried out by a physiotherapy assistant.

ISSUED: May 2014

REPLACES: Sept 2012 Acupuncture, and June 2013 Advisory
