



Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners
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*** *Advisory Opinion* ***

PT Dry Needling

March 24, 2014

PT Dry Needling. The Board has recently received inquiries and complaints from physicians in this state concerning the appropriateness of physical therapists (PTs) performing *dry needling* on their patients. Some have advised that this procedure was performed without the referring physician's knowledge or direction and in one instance the physician reported that due to the patient's condition dry needling was contraindicated. The question has also been raised as to whether the referring physician could bear some liability in the event of a complication.

Given that dry needling is a form of "treatment" it must be preceded by a prescription or referral of a physician or other authorized provider.^[1] In our on-going discussions with the Louisiana Physical Therapy Board, and our consideration of this issue generally, it has become apparent that PTs believe that they are authorized to perform this procedure under a general order of a physician to "evaluate and treat."

In the Board's view, dry needling constitutes the practice of medicine and should only be performed by a physician or an acupuncturist's assistant. While the Board is considering how this issue might best be addressed, we take this opportunity to alert physicians that unless specifically excluded from a physical therapy referral, it is possible that dry needling may be performed on your patient. Therefore, if you do not intend to authorize dry needling on a patient for whom you prescribe physical therapy services you will need to specifically exclude it from your referral.

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^[1]La. Rev. Stat. §37:2418B.