

Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee

Testimony on SB 490

March 9, 2016

Master Chairman, Members of the Committee

I want to thank you for the opportunity to demonstrate my support for Bill SB 351. My name is Drew Dischinger and I am a physical therapist and private practice owner of Sport + Spine Physical Therapy in Overland Park, Kansas. Dry Needling has been utilized as an important part of my practice since the summer of 2013, when I and another Sport + Spine therapist were certified for the first time. This technique has had a profound effect on my practice and our patients. Currently, my clinic has four of our six therapists utilizing Dry Needling with a fifth starting certifications in May. We feel so strongly about the strength of this technique that we have started hosting classes in Kansas City to educate local therapists on this remarkable tool. We have already held two classes which educated sixty people and we have five more classes on the schedule this year alone.

Sport + Spine puts emphasis on educating future therapists and in that effort we take time out of our patient care to teach in Rockhurst University's Physical Therapy program, where we educate full classes through lecture and demonstration on what Dry Needling is. My clinic also takes on Physical Therapy student on their last year of clinical rotations every year. In the last three years we have had a total of six graduate physical therapy students who have observed the use of daily dry needling. In the last year we have begun to allow them to needle the safest areas on staff members with two experienced therapists instructing and observing them.

When we graduate as physical therapists we are considered entry level and after passing our licensing exam are able to care for patients immediately. I graduated from Creighton University, with my Doctorate in Physical Therapy in 2005, and our entry level curriculum included but was not limited to:

1. Human anatomy which included 4 hour labs a day, in human dissection and lecture.
2. Neural anatomy which again included human brain dissection
3. Histology Classes
4. Emergency Medical Responder Classes
5. Integumentary Classes
6. Musculoskeletal Classes
7. Pain Treatment Classes
8. Differential Diagnosis Classes
9. Cardiovascular Classes
10. Pulmonary Classes
11. Movement science Classes
12. Ethics Classes

On top of these courses, I had 46 weeks of clinical rotations that took me around the country learning and practicing alongside seasoned therapists with many different specialties. This included a rotation at Parkland Hospital in Dallas, Texas, an indigent care hospital where I performed wound care and debridement.

The above course load and clinical rotations are a requirement for an entry level Doctorate of Physical Therapy student and in it represents 86% of all the knowledge and skill needed to perform Dry Needling. With the medical field constantly expanding, there is a need for continued education. Part of the Dry Needling certification allows for the continued training in the background and history of Dry Needling, specific optimal positioning for performing the technique, and proper needle handling and care. The Dry Needling certification adds up to 108 hours which develops the missed 14% of knowledge needed to perform Dry Needling. Along with the course work includes 200 required treatment sessions between level one and two for hands on experience. Personally, I am currently working on my second certification from a different company and will say from experience that both have done an excellent job teaching proper techniques as well as progressively teaching muscle groups from least difficult areas to most difficult over the span of a full certification. The student to teacher ratio in both groups has been more than appropriate and each student had more than enough guidance from the instructors.

Dry Needling is a safe technique. Since its start HPSO (Healthcare Providers Service Organization) has not demonstrated any increase in insurance rates and the Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy does not claim a single record of discipline in any jurisdiction for harm caused by Dry Needling performed by a Physical Therapist.

At Sport + Spine, we make sure it is clear to each patient that Dry Needling IS NOT acupuncture. Acupuncture is performed by acupuncturists using the skill unique to their practice. Dry Needling is performed by Physical Therapists using the manual skills and knowledge of a Physical Therapist. The needle is just an instrument and does not make the technique. Just as a scalpel does not make a cardiologist the same as an oncologist or an orthopedic the same as an orthodontist. A needle does not make Dry Needling the same as acupuncture. What makes the technique of Dry Needling is the Physical Therapists unmatched musculoskeletal assessment skills, anatomy knowledge and palpation skills.

At Sport + Spine Dry Needling currently consists of over 30% of our daily practice. We consistently have patients coming to us specifically to request this technique. Our therapists make it a priority that prior to performing any treatment patients understand what the technique is, as well as possible responses post treatment. With every new client we perform a full movement and musculoskeletal evaluation to determine both symptom presentation and areas of mechanical dysfunction. We also make sure to determine test motions that allow us to perform a test/retest to demonstrate progress following treatment. Finally, we make sure patients understand that Dry Needling is just step in the path to recovery but in combination with all our other skills as therapists and the patient's proper self-care at home we will be able to help them fully achieve their goals.