



To: Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee

From: Rachelle Colombo
Director of Government Affairs, Kansas Medical Society

Date: March 10, 2016

Re: SB 490; physical therapist practice act

The Kansas Medical Society appreciates the opportunity to provide comments today on SB 490, the physical therapy practice act. The purpose of SB 490 is to clarify in statute that the modality of "dry needling" is within a physical therapist's scope of practice. Current law is silent on this point.

It appears that about half of the states have approved dry needling by physical therapists, with several requiring PTs to demonstrate that they have the additional education and training to use the modality. This modality, or others very similar to it, are also included in other health care provider practice acts and there has been some confusion as to whether all providers adhere to the same definition of dry needling. In addition, because of its strong similarity to acupuncture (which also involves penetrating the skin with a fine needle for the relief of pain), there is additional confusion about what differentiates one modality from another, and how that distinction would impact the Board's ability to regulate it.

Dry needling involves penetrating the skin with a very thin needle to stimulate underlying "trigger points," muscular and connective tissues primarily for the treatment of pain. A hollow needle is not used and solutions are not injected into the tissue during the use of dry needling.

Dry needling is not utilized for diagnostic purposes, which would be outside the scope of practice for physical therapists. It is our understanding that dry needling is not widely taught in PT education programs, but that it is a procedure that is most often learned by attending courses.

KMS does not object to physical therapists or acupuncturists performing dry needling, assuming they have the requisite education, training and competence. However, for purposes of providing clear direction for the Board of Healing Arts over the professions they regulate, a clear definition of dry needling, and perhaps how it is different than acupuncture, should be included in the bill.

The Kansas Medical Society respectfully requests that when the committee considers SB 490, it would amend the bill to include a clear definition of dry needling. Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.