



Statement on Dry Needling

December 16, 2025

The American Society of Acupuncturists (ASA) supports the safe, ethical, and legally authorized practice of acupuncture and dry needling. The ASA's position is grounded in patient safety, regulatory clarity, and adherence to professional scopes of practice.

Dry needling is the insertion of solid filiform needles into specific anatomical locations for therapeutic effect. The techniques used, anatomical targets addressed, including myofascial trigger points, and intended clinical outcomes substantially overlap with those taught and practiced within the field of acupuncture. Acupuncture education has long integrated both traditional and modern biomedical understandings, including musculoskeletal anatomy, neurophysiology, and myofascial pain mechanisms.

Licensed acupuncturists complete extensive acupuncture-specific education that includes anatomy, contraindications, clean needle technique, patient assessment, and emergency management. Some physicians who practice acupuncture similarly complete substantial post-doctoral training consistent with national standards recognizing acupuncture and related needling techniques as invasive procedures.

Dry needling involves skin penetration with inherent risks such as infection, nerve injury, and, in rare cases, serious complications including pneumothorax. These risks necessitate comprehensive didactic education, supervised clinical training, and independent third party assessment of practitioner competence. This aligns with the requirements of becoming an acupuncturist which includes a minimum of 1905 hours, 1245 hours of didactic training and 660 hours of supervised clinical training.

At present, there is no nationally standardized, independently accredited educational pathway or competency examination specific to dry needling. Training requirements vary widely, contributing to consumer confusion, particularly regarding the distinction between course completion certificates and independent professional certification. A certificate is issued by the training provider upon completion of a course. Certification requires passing an independent, nationally recognized examination.



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In some states, authorization to perform dry needling has occurred through regulatory guidance rather than explicit legislative inclusion within a profession's practice act. The ASA maintains that acupuncture and dry needling should only be performed by practitioners whose state-defined scope of practice explicitly includes acupuncture and/or dry needling.

The ASA supports integrated, collaborative healthcare and believes that clear language, consistent training standards, and transparent regulation are fundamental to patient safety and effective patient care.

The American Society of Acupuncturists is a federation of member state acupuncture associations that represent the professional practice of acupuncture as a whole system of medicine through advocacy, education, and research. www.Asacu.org