



KENTUCKY BOARD of PHYSICAL THERAPY

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Opinion and Declaratory ruling regarding state law governing dry needling therapy by the Kentucky Board of Physical Therapy.

Introduction.

The board has authorized this Opinion as an Opinion and Declaratory Ruling pursuant to KRS 13A.130(3) and KRS 13A.010(2)(b) as the agency with jurisdiction to interpret the statutes and regulations governing the practice of physical therapy in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The Board has been presented with an inquiry governing this topic, and has reviewed a previous Opinion and Declaratory Ruling on electrophysiologic evaluations dated May 18, 2004. The Board first examines the definition of the practice of "physical therapy" under state statute.

KRS 327.010(1) states in pertinent part:

"Physical therapy" means the use of selected knowledge and skills in planning, organizing and directing programs for the care of individuals whose ability to function is impaired or threatened by disease or injury, encompassing preventive measures, screening, . . . and evaluation and invasive or noninvasive procedures with emphasis on the skeletal system, neuromuscular, and cardiopulmonary function, as it relates to physical therapy. Physical therapy includes screening or evaluations performed to determine the degree of impairment of relevant aspects such as, but not limited to, nerve and muscle function including subcutaneous bioelectrical potentials, motor development, functional capacity, and respiratory or circulatory efficiency.

The Board is of the opinion dry needling is within the scope of the practice of "physical therapy" as defined in Kentucky law by the General Assembly at KRS 327.010(1). Dry needling is a treatment used to improve neuromuscular function. As such it falls within the definition of physical therapy as defined under KRS 327:010 (1) "Physical therapy" means the use of selected knowledge and skills ...invasive or noninvasive procedures with emphasis on the skeletal system, neuromuscular, and cardiopulmonary function, as it relates to physical therapy. There is nothing in KRS Chapter 327 to prohibit a licensed physical therapist from performing dry needling so long as the physical therapist is competent in performing this intervention.

While dry needling is within the scope of practice of physical therapy, a physical therapist must practice only those procedures that the physical therapist is

competent to perform. The Board can discipline a physical therapist for “engaging or permitting the performance of substandard patient care by himself or by persons working under their supervision due to a deliberate or negligent act or failure to act, regardless of whether actual injury to the patient is established.” KRS 327.070(2).

II. Conclusion

As the agency authorized by the Kentucky General Assembly to regulate the practice of physical therapy in this Commonwealth, the Board is empowered to interpret its statutes and regulations. In summary, dry needling is within the scope of the practice of “physical therapy” as defined by KRS 327.010(1).

Sincerely yours,

Kentucky Board of Physical Therapy

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peggy Block".

By: _____
Peggy Block, P.T., Chair

cc: Board members