



Vote Yes on HB26-1042: Dry Needling by Occupational Therapists

Sponsors: Rep. Feret, Rep. Bradley, and Sen. Ball

For several years, members of OTAC have requested that the Occupational Therapy Practice Act be modified to allow qualified licensed occupational therapists to perform dry needling. We are excited to share that the Physical Therapists support OT's ability to dry needle, allowing patients broader access to treatment.

What is Dry Needling?

Dry needling is a therapy which uses thin dry needles that are inserted into an individual's muscles which release muscle tension and pain. The needle helps increase blood flow to the muscle and reduces muscle tightness. Patients receiving dry needling report that they have improved mobility and pain relief.

Overview

- Allows licensed Occupational Therapists to perform dry needling, subject to specific education, competency, consent, and regulatory requirements set by the Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA).
- Create parity with physical therapists, who are authorized to perform dry needling and have recently completed a robust rulemaking process.
- Consumer protections include:
 - licensed Occupational Therapists must provide written informed consent to patients.
 - Provided information to patients about the potential benefits and risks

Why Dry Needling by Occupational Therapists?

- Dry needling can be an additional evidence-based modality within an OT plan of care, alongside therapeutic exercise and manual therapy.
- Allowing qualified OTs to offer this modality would improve access and continuity of care.

Dry needling is not Acupuncture

- Dry needling is a musculoskeletal intervention that targets trigger points and muscle tissue using anatomy and neurophysiology-informed clinical reasoning.
- Acupuncture is a separate discipline with its own theoretical framework, training pathways, and licensure.
- **This legislation does not change acupuncture regulation and does not authorize occupational therapists to practice acupuncture.**



Education, Training, and Ethical Safeguards

- Occupational therapists graduate from ACOTE (Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education) includes neuroscience, kinesiology, biomechanics, and related biological/physical sciences.
- ACOTE standards also emphasize risk mitigation—including sound safety judgment and adherence to safety protocols (e.g., the ability to assess and monitor vital signs), and training in applying interventions using an indications/contraindications/precautions framework.
- OTs are obligated to practice within their competence, use interventions only when they are clinically indicated, and prioritize beneficence and nonmaleficence (do good/do no harm), supported by clear, documented informed consent and transparency about risks, benefits, and alternatives.

A vote yes on HB26-1042 would ensure that OT patients and clients have access to this beneficial therapy to reduce pain and increase quality of life.

Thank you for your consideration, The Occupational Therapy Association of Colorado: Steve Balcerovich, OTAC Contract Lobbyist (720-351-2007); and Tim Coleman, OTAC Contract Lobbyist (303-242-9270).