

Honorable Committee,

I was the previous chair of the Maryland Board of Acupuncture and all eight of my years on the board dry needling was an issue.

I see a terrifying trend in healthcare that Dry Needling has become a workaround for other healthcare professions to perform acupuncture under the guise of a western medical procedure. It has happened with physical therapists as well as chiropractors. Athletic trainers are just the next in line to appropriate acupuncture at the risk of Maryland's citizens.

The biggest problem here is that dry needling was coined by a medical doctor, Janet Travelle, in 1983. She used syringes to break up adhesions in the soft tissue and even stated that acupuncture needles were too small to perform this task. Dry needling practitioners have appropriated the acupuncture needles and perform needling distal acupuncture points and electrical stimulation. Neither of these techniques come from the dry needling texts and are a straight appropriation of acupuncture. Furthermore, neither PTs nor chiropractors teach these techniques in the short classes. Both fields' lobby groups have spread misinformation on acupuncture to discredit my profession. Statements such as "acupuncture does not go as deep," "dry needling has more research," and perhaps the most egregious, "we don't use any of that Chinese stuff". The first two statements are bald-faced lies. Dry needling practitioners are using acupuncture needles that are made longer for specific acupuncture techniques, and acupuncture has over 30,000 studies in English alone, including over 8,000 RCTs. Other fields realize that acupuncture outperforms them and are weaseling their way into our field. The last statement about not using Chinese theory is an insult to my field and the Asian community.

I know that PTs and chiropractors are touting the safety and efficacy of dry needling; however, I know of four patients who have had pneumothoraxes due to physical therapists performing dry needling on them. Sadly, because none of these patients came forward and reported this, the physical therapists can continue unchecked. When I was the Chair of the Board of Acupuncture, the safety officer for the physical therapy board said he thought the PTs were going too far with the dry needling.

For more than three years, my field has been waiting for regulations designed with consideration to patient safety and acupuncturists' training. They were met with mild objections from other lobby groups, and our regulations have been shelved. It feels as though the state does not understand how in-depth our training and knowledge base is, especially since our doctorate requires more classroom and practical hours than chiropractors, physical therapists, and other allied health professions. It feels as though there is both ignorance and arrogance by other professions and a derogatory sentiment toward our field history and culture and countries of origin. Ideally, instead of money-hungry practitioners trying to keep the patients in their office, they should refer to practitioners who are appropriately trained to perform the full scope and breadth of acupuncture.

Why are other healthcare professionals allowed to write their own ticket, appropriating another field's scope? In contrast, my field sits in limbo, asking for the right to perform services when we have both a historical claim and proper training to perform?

I strongly oppose Bill 711, and I'm asking for your support to keep patients safe. I would love the opportunity to speak to you about this matter and any issues that involve patient safety.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Dr. Tom Ingegno, DACM, LAc
Doctor of Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine,