

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF MEDICAL ACUPUNCTURE®

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4 March 2022

House Health & Government Operations Committee
Delegate Shane Pendergrass, Chair

Re: MD HB1016 Dry Needling by Athletic Trainers
Position: OPPOSE

Dear Chairwoman Pendergrass and Members of the Committee,

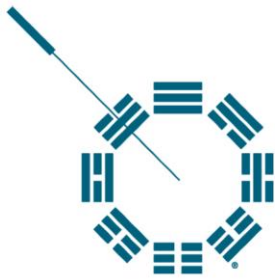
We are co-chairs of the Legislative Committee of the American Academy of Medical Acupuncture (AAMA), an organization of allopathic and osteopathic physicians (MDs and DOs) who have incorporated acupuncture into our medical practices. We are writing to share information in regard to HB1016 which would permit athletic trainers to perform dry needling.

The AAMA does not support dry needling performed by athletic trainers. They receive no training in this invasive procedure during undergraduate education. Taking a weekend course in dry needling from one of over twenty programs advertised on the internet does not guarantee proficiency or safety in performing the technique. It must be noted that there can be serious consequences due to adverse effects of the treatment.

Please read the attached AAMA Dry Needling Position Statement. There are many factors to consider before allowing any health care professional to insert needles into patients.

If you require more information about medical acupuncture or dry needling, please reach out to us at the AAMA. We would be happy to connect you with Maryland physicians who perform acupuncture. Their perspectives may be of value as you consider health care initiatives for your constituents.

Respectfully,
Donna Pittman, MD and Gavin Elliott, MD
AAMA Legislative Committee Co-chairs



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American Academy of Medical Acupuncture Position Statement on Dry Needling

The American Academy of Medical Acupuncture, the premier North American organization of physician acupuncturists (MDs and DOs), is committed to safeguarding public health and safety by advocating for proper training of all persons who practice acupuncture. It is imperative that legal authorities and medical bodies maintain strict standards of education and training before any health care professional inserts a needle into a patient.

Dry needling, like acupuncture, is an invasive procedure in which a thin, solid needle is inserted into a muscle to stimulate and break up muscular knots and bands. The technique frequently involves needling close to sensitive structures like blood vessels, nerves, and organs such as the lungs. Adverse effects include bruising, hematoma, infection, nerve and vascular injuries, and pneumothorax. Practitioners must be competent to recognize and manage all possible adverse effects of dry needling treatments. An ill-trained practitioner could cause substantial medical injury or even death.

Dry needling has traditionally been performed by physician acupuncturists and licensed acupuncturists. These practitioners have advanced training in this technique and the management of potential adverse effects. In recent years some states have allowed physical therapists, occupational therapists, and athletic trainers to incorporate dry needling into their practices. It is the responsibility of the training institutions, professional organizations, certifying bodies, licensing authorities, and malpractice insurance providers to oversee these practitioners to ensure that they receive proper instruction in dry needling and perform the technique safely.

Adopted 11 January 2022