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WHEREAS, the Board of Registration of Allied Health Professionals (hereinafter, the "Board") finds that dry needling for intramuscular therapy is a physical intervention that uses a filiform needle to stimulate trigger points, diagnose and treat neuromuscular pain and functional movement deficits; is based upon Western medical concepts; requires an examination and diagnosis, and treats specific anatomic entities selected according to physical signs and symptoms;

WHEREAS, the Board finds that dry needling for intramuscular therapy does not include the stimulation of auricular or distal points;

WHEREAS, the practice of physical therapy in the Commonwealth is defined as "a health profession that utilizes the application of scientific principles for the identification, prevention, remediation, and rehabilitation of acute or prolonged physical dysfunction . . . is evaluation, treatment, and instruction related to neuromuscular, musculoskeletal, cardiovascular, and respiratory functions Such treatment shall include but is not limited to the use of therapeutic exercise, physical activities, mobilization, functional and endurance training, traction, bronchopulmonary hygiene postural drainage, temporary splinting and bracing, massage, heat, cold, water, radiant energy, electricity or sound." G. L. c. 112, § 23A;

WHEREAS, the practice of physical therapy in the Commonwealth does not include the practice of medicine. G. L. c. 112, § 23L. The practice of medicine in the Commonwealth is defined, in turn, as involving the following conduct: "diagnosis, treatment, use of instruments or other devices, or the prescribing, administering, dispensing, or distributing of drugs for the relief of disease or adverse physical or mental conditions." 243 Code Mass. Regs. § 2.01(4);

WHEREAS, the practice of acupuncture in the Commonwealth is defined first and foremost as the practice of medicine, "based upon Traditional Oriental Medical Theories; primarily the insertion of metal needles through the skin at certain points on the body . . . in an attempt to relieve pain or improve body function." G. L. c. 112, § 148; and

WHEREAS, the Board finds that dry needling for intramuscular therapy, when performed by physical therapists in those jurisdictions that have authorized its practice, is not held out as acupuncture. Additionally, dry needling for intramuscular therapy, as it does not involve the use of either prescriptive medications or medical instruments or devices, is not the practice of medicine and accordingly cannot meet the definition of the practice of acupuncture in the Commonwealth.



NOW WHEREFORE, the Board concludes that dry needling for intramuscular therapy is within the scope of practice of physical therapy in the Commonwealth, assuming that the practitioner has all relevant adequate education, training, and experience in the technique. As this involves an individual matter of professional competence, the Board declines to dictate the nature and extent of such education, training, and experience, other than to state ...

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