

### What are some pros and cons of dry needling and acupuncture?

—Dry needling can be a strong therapy, and is often not recommended for people who are sensitive. However, because it is a strong technique, dry needling sometimes can be more effective than acupuncture at treating musculoskeletal pain and trigger points.

—Dry needling can be covered by insurance sometimes even easier than acupuncture can.

—Because dry needling is a strong technique, it is more likely than acupuncture to cause fainting, bleeding or bruising. These risks still exist with acupuncture, but there tend to be fewer incidences due to its gentleness.

—Dry needling is not suggested around the

chest or mid-back (near the lungs or ribs) unless the practitioner has a Level Two training or above. These areas are more susceptible to a punctured lung (pneumothorax). Level Two training means the practitioner has been trained and supervised in needling these areas. Level One only allows for needling trigger points in the upper back and neck area. Always ask your practitioner if they have been certified to needle the thoracic area.

—Physical therapists, chiropractors, and medical doctors have a tremendous amount of training in musculoskeletal conditions, but do not have as many hours of training in acupuncture needling safety as licensed acupuncturists do. Needling can be a dangerous procedure, and it is always a good idea to ask a practitioner how much training they

have in their therapies. Typically, licensed acupuncturists have about 1,000 hours of supervised needling training and are certified in Clean Needle Technique, while non-licensed practitioners have about 100 hours, sometimes more, sometimes less, of supervised needle training and are not required to pass the Clean Needle Technique course.

—Both dry needling and acupuncture can address acute and chronic pain.

—Especially with esoteric acupuncture, it can be so gentle, that it is not as successful at treating musculoskeletal disorders. It is always a good idea to ask a licensed acupuncturist if they specialize in treating pain.

—Acupuncture can be used for a wide variety of conditions including pain from muscu-

loskeletal disorders, pain from chronic disease, and internal medicine syndromes.

The discussion of dry needling versus acupuncture can sometimes be a sensitive one. Some practitioners will debate on either side. There are many legal grey areas with multiple medical practices. As a patient, it is best to be as informed as possible. Always ask any practitioner, especially one who is performing an invasive procedure, what his/her qualifications are if they are not publicly listed. Both dry needling and acupuncture are valuable, valid techniques. There are similarities and differences, and their assets need to be understood and used appropriately.

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