

Position Statement – North Carolina Board of Physical Therapy Examiners

9. Use and Storage of Medications for Iontophoresis and Phonophoresis

Adopted – September, 23, 2005 and October 12, 2005

Reviewed – September 23, 2010, June 17, 2015

As a result of information in the Summer 2005 Board Newsletter, the Board has received numerous questions asking if physical therapists could use “community jars (stock containers) / community solutions” of prescription medications with physical therapy treatments. Ben F. Massey, Jr., PT, Executive Director, attended the North Carolina Board of Pharmacy meeting on September 20, 2005 to present the issue to the Pharmacy Board. In response to this inquiry and a follow-up inquiry from John M. Silverstein, Board Attorney, the PT Board received the following responses from David Work, Executive Director of the Pharmacy Board:

SEPTEMBER 23, 2005

This is a summary of the response of the North Carolina Board of Pharmacy to your inquiry presented to them on September 20, 2005.

The Members agreed that it was appropriate for physical therapists to use commercial or compounded products with Phonophoresis and Iontophoresis treatments by physical therapists. The most common drugs used in these procedures are dexamethasone and hydrocortisone.

This could be accomplished in either one of two ways. A patient could obtain an individual prescription from a prescriber for a product, which would then be used by a physical therapist on that patient. Another procedure would be for a prescriber to issue an order for a stock container of a specific concentration of hydrocortisone or dexamethasone for use within a physical therapy practice. It would be anticipated that the physical therapist(s) would then use the product from the stock containers on patients in their practice according to written procedures developed between the prescriber and the physical therapy practice.

We had a good discussion earlier this week and trust that the Board’s decision will work to the benefit of patients receiving physical therapy.

OCTOBER 12, 2005

This is in reply to your fax of October 6th which requests a clarification on the use of the term “written procedures developed between the prescriber and the physical therapy practice.” In this case a written prescription would be unnecessary since the prescriber would have ordered the stock container for use in the physical therapy practice. Prescriptions are only necessary for individual patients and a stock container is intended for multiple uses. We believe that the written procedure should cover both the ordering of the stock container and administration of the product within the physical therapy practice.

Based on this response from the Pharmacy Board, when physical therapy licensees incorporate iontophoresis or phonophoresis in the treatment, the Physical Therapy Board encourages licensees to consider the following:

- All patients who receive iontophoresis or phonophoresis with prescription medications by a physical therapist or physical therapist assistant must have a signed prescription or written protocol from a physician that indicates specific dosages. A “blanket order” for

iontophoresis or phonophoresis is not sufficient. Physical therapy direct access does not allow a physical therapist to administer prescription medications without a physician's order.

- A patient can obtain an individual prescription from a prescriber for a product, which would then be used by a physical therapist on a specific patient.
- A prescriber could issue an order for a stock container of a specific concentration of medication (i.e., hydrocortisone, dexamethasone) for use within a physical therapy practice. The physical therapist would then use the medications from the stock container on patients from the prescriber in his/her practice according to written procedures developed between the prescriber and the physical therapy practice. With the prescriber's written permission, a physical therapist may use the prescriber's stock container for patients from other referring physicians.
- The physical therapy practice should maintain accurate records of all patients who receive iontophoresis and phonophoresis that includes the name of the patient, date of treatment, referring physician, type of treatment, and specific dosage of medications.
- The physical therapist may store iontophoresis and phonophoresis prescription medications (but not controlled substances) in stock containers; however, all expired medications should be properly discarded in a timely manner.

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