



The Board of Naturopathy recently received inquiries regarding Extracorporeal Shock Wave Therapy and fibrosis release/mobilization under anesthesia.

1. Acoustic Compression Therapy (also known as Extracorporeal Shock Wave Therapy or ESWT) is a non-surgical procedure that uses acoustic pulses to treat acute and chronic pain in muscles, tendons, and joints. These acoustic sound waves are short-duration, intense-energy pulses that are generated outside of the body (extracorporeal) to stimulate healing for various conditions of the musculoskeletal system. The sound waves converge to a point that permeates within soft tissue to exert a mechanical stress on cells. This includes breaking up areas of muscular spasm, forcing lactic acid out of damaged tissues, and promoting blood flow and oxygen to help revitalize damaged cells.

The concept of focused ESWT works by healing at the speed of sound. Fascia is the connective tissue that surrounds all muscles, tendons, ligaments, bones, and organs within the body. When healthy tissue experiences physical trauma, scarring or inflammation occurs, which makes the elasticity more restricted and can create tension or pain in the rest of the body. ESWT technology uses a linear and focused pressure wave aimed to pinpoint these specific tissues within the body.

Contraindications for ESWT would include infections, blood clotting disorders, malignant tissue, pregnancy, patients with implanted medical devices (such as pacemakers), and pediatric patients.

Naturopathic scope of practice in [RCW 18.36A.040](#) includes “physical modalities”. This term is defined under [RCW 18.36A.020\(12\)](#) as meaning the “use of physical, chemical, electrical, and other modalities that do not exceed those used as of July 22, 2011, in minor office procedures or common diagnostic procedures, including but not limited to heat, cold, air, light, water in any of its forms, **sound**, massage, and therapeutic exercise.” [emphasis added]

2. Fibrosis release/mobilization under anesthesia (which was later clarified that a board certified anesthesiologist would perform the anesthesia portion).

Muscles, tendons, ligaments, fascia, and nerves are prone to adverse changes as a result of trauma, misuse, or repetition. This can lead to swelling, fibrosis (scarring that occurs in the muscles), and adhesions (a binding between separate tissue). Without treatment, these conditions may lead to muscular weakness, numbness, aching, tingling, and burning sensations. Soft tissue release techniques focus on removing restrictions that inhibit full range of motion by breaking up or removing the fibrosis or adhesion. It is designed to restore motion, release entrapped nerves, and improve circulation of the vascular and/or lymphatic system(s).

Naturopathic scope of practice ([RCW 18.36A.040](#)) includes “physical modalities”, the definition of which (see quote above) includes “massage”, as well as “manual manipulation (mechanotherapy)”. This term is defined as the “manipulation of a part or the whole of the body by hand or by mechanical means.”

The board re-emphasizes that anesthesia generally uses controlled substances to achieve sedation. Naturopathic physicians can only be authorized for codeine and testosterone products in Schedules III, IV, and V of the Washington Uniform Controlled Substance Act ([chapter 69.50 RCW](#)); neither of which are used for anesthesia.

It is the board’s general position that health care practitioners, including naturopathic physicians, should have the appropriate education and training, and exercise the corresponding degree of care, when providing any service within their scope of practice.