

Name: Daniel Stein

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Group: 7B-2

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Pathology Question: What is trigger point injection

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Report: Trigger point injections are a form of therapy to relieve high tension sites in muscle/connective tissue referred to as the trigger points. These sites respond to chronic strain by producing tight nodules known as muscle knots and are a common finding in patients suffering from TMD. When stimulated, trigger points may radiate pain causing aches and discomfort in the muscles surrounding the jaw. In order to manage these complaints, patients may be offered trigger point injections which involve administering a form of local anesthetic, corticosteroid, or a dry needle at the affected site to improve local circulation and relieve the muscle tension. Studies have also shown potential in using botox for these trigger point injections.

This practice is not unique to TMDs since muscle knots can form all throughout the body. For that reason, these injections are often administered in sites on extremities, the back, and neck. When trigger points develop due to a TMD, injections are often administered at sites of the muscles involved in mastication such as the temporalis, masseter, or lateral pterygoid. To detect these sites, palpation for tenderness is performed.

References:

1. Aksu Ö, Pekin Doğan Y, Sayiner Çağlar N, Şener BM. Comparison of the efficacy of dry needling and trigger point injections with exercise in temporomandibular myofascial pain treatment. *Turk J Phys Med Rehabil.* 2019;65(3):228-235. Published 2019 Aug 20. doi:10.5606/tftrd.2019.1802
2. Wong CS, Wong SH. A new look at trigger point injections. *Anesthesiol Res Pract.* 2012;2012:492452. doi:10.1155/2012/492452

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