

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says the rate of opioid deaths is slowing for the first time since the epidemic began. Factors could include an emphasis on alternatives for managing pain such as physical therapy and exercise along with non-opioid medications such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT).

Some physical therapists for OSF HealthCare are also using a technique known as dry needling for treatment of certain types of pain and movement impairments. Thirty five year-old Michael Downs of Knoxville is a prison guard and serves in the Army National Reserve. Downs suffered from [plantar fasciitis](#), an inflammation of the tissue in the foot that connects your heel to your toes.

He received cortisone shots but Downs was still in agonizing pain that lasted for 10 months.

“There were days it would get so bad that I would have to go hide (laughs) and cry a little bit, cry it out and then get back to work ‘cuz it was so painful,” the burly and buff reservist shared. He said the pain would force him awake at night and he would find himself using furniture to brace himself so he could walk.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says the rate of opioid deaths is slowing for the first time since the epidemic began. Factors could include an emphasis on alternatives for managing pain such as physical therapy and exercise along with non-opioid medications such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT).

Some physical therapists for OSF HealthCare are also using a technique known as dry needling for treatment of certain types of pain and movement impairments. Thirty five year-old Michael Downs of Knoxville is a prison guard and serves in the Army National Reserve. Downs suffered from [plantar fasciitis](#), an inflammation of the tissue in the foot that connects your heel to your toes.

He received cortisone shots but Downs was still in agonizing pain that lasted for 10 months.

“There were days it would get so bad that I would have to go hide (laughs) and cry a little bit, cry it out and then get back to work ‘cuz it was so painful,” the burly and buff reservist shared. He said the pain would force him awake at night and he would find himself using furniture to brace himself so he could walk.

“The needle is very, very fine. When we get it out of the package, it’s encapsulated in a little case but it’s very flimsy. You can kind of see that it just moves up and down – it’s not a hard, metal needle.”

Does the treatment hurt? Cinnamon says it does hurt a little.

“But it’s not long lasting and it’s not severe, severe pain. Usually to people that are in a severe amount of pain, it feels like nothing to them,” she added.

Michael Downs agrees. The short-term discomfort during treatment was far outweighed by the instant relief.

“I felt it immediately. But, it keeps on getting better after that point. I would come in every two days and I think after about five treatments I felt great. That’s when I started running again.”

Downs no longer experiences the stinging pain he would feel when he would put his feet down first thing in the morning. He says his left foot is 100 percent healed and he expects his right foot will be pain-free following a few more treatments.

Dry needle therapy is always part of a larger treatment plan and is usually covered by insurance as part of physical therapy. For Downs, that means also sticking religiously with his stretching exercises as recommended by his therapist.

Since Downs began his treatment, he has become a bit of an evangelist for it. He's telling co-workers who suffer from similar ailments that it can be life-changing. "It works so fast," he declared when talking about what he stresses to others.

If you think you could be helped, talk with [your doctor or physical therapist](#) to see if dry needle therapy is available at an OSF HealthCare location near you.