

tive, it is imperative that the data conveyed be exact.

*Joseph Greensher, MD  
Chairman  
Committee on Accident  
and Poison Prevention  
American Academy of Pediatrics*

*William H. Montgomery, MD  
Chairman, the 1985 National  
Conference on Standards and  
Guidelines for Cardiopulmonary  
Resuscitation and Emergency  
Cardiac Care*

### Heimlich Maneuver or Chest Thrust or ?

As an American Heart Association (AHA) instructor in basic life support to dental auxiliary students and the public since 1981, I read Surgeon General Koop's editorial ["The Heimlich Maneuver"] in the November-December issue of *Public Health Reports* with a great deal of interest.

Dr. Heimlich's long-standing objection to use of back blows for treatment of the obstructed airway is well known. One result of this difference of opinion is avoidance by AHA of the term "Heimlich Maneuver" in its publications. Instead, AHA uses "abdominal thrust."

By citing from the July 11-13 conference on first-aid standards that "abdominal thrusts" are "... hazardous, even lethal," Dr. Koop creates confusion among AHA-trained instructors who consider the abdominal thrust synonymous with the Heimlich maneuver. Terminology becomes quite important here; we equate the terms; now a distinction is being made and clarification is necessary.

Another question arises with chest thrusts that are now "hazardous." The AHA Student Manual (1) states "... because it is impossible to perform safe or effective abdominal thrusts on these victims (pregnant or obese), chest thrusts should be performed." What is recommended treatment for airway obstruction in the pregnant or obese if neither the abdominal thrust (Heimlich Maneuver) nor the chest thrust is advised?

*Shant Markarian, DDS  
Director and Associate Professor  
Dental Auxiliary Education  
Indiana University at South Bend*

### Reference.....

1. Student manual for life support. American Heart Association, 1981, p. 52.

### Dr. Koop Responds

The success of a maneuver to dislodge a foreign body from the airway depends on a reservoir of air being forcibly expelled through the airway. The Heimlich Maneuver defines a specific action. "Chest thrusts" and

"abdominal thrusts" do not always convey the same specificity. Confusion can be avoided by teaching the mechanism involved.

As with any unusual situation (pregnancy, obesity), necessity is the author of invention, and an understanding of the mechanism rather than semantics should lead to alternate and hopefully successful actions.

In children there is no doubt that the American Academy of Pediatrics' position is correct. The accidental exclusion of the exception from the editorial was corrected in a press release.

*C. Everett Koop, MD, ScD  
Surgeon General*

### What Is the PHS Goal for Sodium Levels?

In an effort to reduce the risk factor for hypertension, the U.S. Government has suggested that the average daily sodium ingestion (as measured by excretion) should be reduced at least to the 3-6-gram range (130-260 mmol), as reported in the September-October 1983 *Public Health Reports* supplement (1).

I am informed that the real intention was to set the 1990 goal at 3-6 grams of salt (50-100 mmol) (personal communications, J. M. McGinnis, 1985; R. Levy, 1985). I feel it would be valuable both within and outside the United States if the correct figure could be published in *Public Health Reports*. It may be worth mentioning that the Australian Recommended Dietary Intake (RDI) for sodium is 40-100 mmol per day (2).

*Dr. Trevor C. Beard  
Chief Investigator  
Canberra Blood Pressure Trial  
P. O. Box 11  
Woden, A.C.T. 2606 Australia*

### References.....

1. Public Health Service implementation plans for attaining the objectives for the nation. *Public Health Rep (Suppl.)* 98: 6-16, September-October 1983.
2. National Health and Medical Research Council: Report of the 93rd session: supplementary table of recommended dietary intakes. Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra, 1983.

### Clarification of Sodium Figure Quoted in 1990 Objectives for the Nation

Dr. Beard is correct in noting that the "daily sodium ingestion" of 3-6 grams referred to in objective "b" of the High Blood Pressure Objectives and in objective "g" of the Nutrition Objectives is erroneously stated (Promoting Health/Preventing Disease: Objectives for the Nation, pages 7 and 75, respectively).

It should read "salt," not "sodium." Three to six grams of salt corresponds roughly to 1.2-2.4 grams sodium. Likewise, the baseline data cited should read 4-10 grams salt (or 1.6-4 grams sodium).

The objective was initially based on data from the 1976-80 Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (HANES) II survey. The 24-hour dietary recall component of this survey found the mean daily sodium consumption to be about 2.3 grams for females (range for 18-74-year-olds: 1.9-2.3 grams) and about 3.3 grams for males (range for 18-74-year-olds: 2.9-4.1 grams). It should, however, also be noted that the midcourse review recently completed for the high blood pressure component of the 1990 objectives suggests that a sodium target as low as 1.2-2.4 grams daily may not be necessary for the entire population. The issue is currently under study.

*J. Michael McGinnis, MD  
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health  
Disease Prevention and Health Promotion*

### Injuries Are Not Accidents

I was particularly pleased to see so much of the November-December 1985 issue of the *Public Health Reports* devoted to the subject of injuries. It is evidence of the enormous commitment and responsibility of *Public Health Reports* in promoting injury prevention.

After so many years of trying to sensitize the public health community to the fact that injuries are not "accidents," it seems ironic that an editorial coauthored by Michael K. Gemmell, Executive Director, Association of Schools of Public Health, and myself should appear in *Public Health Reports* with the title "The Possible Dream: Accident Prevention and Injury Control—A Conference to Chart Advances and Plan Strategy." In truth, injuries are not accidents. They occur all too

predictably and in repetitive patterns.

The Carter Center of Emory University stated that if we apply what we know about injury prevention, motor vehicle-related injuries and their attendant costs could be reduced by 75 percent and home-based injuries by 50 percent. Yet injury prevention has not ranked high in the hierarchy of public health priorities. I think it stems, in large part, from the common misconception that injuries are random events beyond our control. I also believe that the term "accident" reinforces that misconception and makes it difficult to convince the public that successful intervention strategies can be applied. For this reason, I prefer not to use the word "accident" when discussing injuries.

The title of our editorial was inspired by the Assistant Secretary for Health's report "Promoting Health/Preventing Disease: Objectives for the Nation," which had an objective titled Accident Prevention and Control (1). After seeing it in print, we realize that the editorial's title was a mistake. I can assure you that we won't make that mistake again. . . it was an accident. It seems that all of us at some time have been caught.

*Vernon N. Houk, MD  
Assistant Surgeon General  
Director  
Center for Environmental Health  
Centers for Disease Control*

### Reference.....

1. Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health: Promoting health/preventing disease: objectives for the nation. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1980.

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