



# United States Lifesaving Association

PO Box 366 ♦ Huntington Beach, California 92648 ♦ Tel: 866-FOR-USLA

[www.usla.org](http://www.usla.org)

---

June 1, 2004

**B. Chris Brewster**  
*President*

**Jerry Gavin**  
*Vice-President*

**David Shotwell**  
*Secretary*

**Greg Farry**  
*Treasurer*

**Duke Brown**  
*Recurrent Representative*

**Eric Bauer**  
*Liaison Officer*

**Tim Gallagher**  
*Advisor*

**Dr. Peter Wernicki**  
*Medical Advisor*

**John "Chip" More**  
*Legal Advisor*

Jim Roberts, Editor  
Cornell Alumni Magazine  
Cornell University  
Day Hall Lobby  
Ithaca, NY 14853-2801

RE: LETTER OF DR. HENRY HEIMLICH

In response to a thoroughly researched article by Brad Herzog, in which I was quoted, Dr. Henry Heimlich states of me, "I met the [United States Lifesaving Association] president several years ago when I lectured to the USLA. I recommended using the Heimlich maneuver to clear water from the lungs. This advice was at odds with the USLA president who promotes a suction device made for that purpose."

Dr. Heimlich's latter statement, obviously intended to impugn my motives, is entirely and utterly false. For one thing, I know of no "suction device" intended to clear water from the lungs. For another, I serve without compensation and am not involved in the business of product endorsement. Furthermore, the United States Lifesaving Association has never endorsed such a device or Dr. Heimlich's recommended procedure – quite the contrary.

Dr. Heimlich also refers to anecdotal evidence of a case involving a prior officer of our association as evidence of the efficacy of his procedure. To my knowledge, this case has never been investigated in any way that could qualify as medical research, including by Dr. Heimlich.

It is my view that Brad Herzog was extraordinarily charitable in stating that Dr. Heimlich's recommendations remain, "... a matter of debate in the medical community." If there is a debate, it apparently involves Dr. Heimlich versus everyone else. I know of no recognized medical authorities who join in Dr. Heimlich's promotion of his recommendations with respect to drowning resuscitation. Presumably this is partly because it would be utterly unethical (and a violation of the Hippocratic oath) to recommend a medical procedure without carefully documented research demonstrating its efficacy.

Our own Medical Advisor, Dr. Peter Wernicki M.D., recently wrote Dr. Heimlich requesting documentation for two drowning rescue cases Dr. Heimlich cited in a 1995 article he wrote which was published in our magazine, American

Lifeguard. Through the years, Dr. Heimlich has frequently cited these same two case reports as primary evidence to support his advocacy of the Heimlich maneuver for drowning rescue. The two cases have been published in articles by Dr. Heimlich in medical journals (including JAMA and Annals of Emergency Medicine) and were presented by Dr. Heimlich to national committees of the Institute of Medicine and the American Heart Association. The website of the Heimlich Institute includes articles which cite these two cases.

Dr. Wernicki requested that Dr. Heimlich provide basic documentation for these two cases, such as hospital reports, names of attending physicians, EMT reports, etc. Dr. Wernicki also asked Dr. Heimlich for the names of any participants in these cases whom he had interviewed. Dr. Heimlich was unable to provide *any* documentation or information on these cases, dismissively stating, "You surely remember that the incidents occurred some 25 to 30 years ago." [See correspondence attached.]

Without any supporting evidence, it is impossible to verify any of the facts as presented by Dr. Heimlich. It is also unclear what documentation, if any, Dr. Heimlich has *ever* had to support these two cases. Indeed, it appears that the evidence Dr. Heimlich has cited is, at best, hearsay.

Dr. Heimlich remains undeterred.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Chris Brewster', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

B. Chris Brewster  
President

NOTE: I can be reached via the various contact information at the bottom of page 1 of this letter.