

INCREASING PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THE HEIMLICH MANEUVER: AN ANALYSIS OF NEWS REPORTS IN TÜRKİYE HEIMLICH MANEUVER NEWS FROM TÜRKİYE

HEİMLİCH MANEVRASI KONUSUNDA HALKIN FARKINDALIĞININ ARTIŞI: TÜRKİYE'DEKİ HABER İÇERİKLERİNİN ANALİZİ TÜRKİYE'DEKİ HEİMLİCH MANEVRASI HABERLERİ

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Dear Editor,

The Heimlich maneuver is a life-saving technique used in choking incidents, and public awareness of it is increasing in Türkiye. However, many cases go unrecorded in healthcare data, as individuals who recover after the maneuver often do not seek medical attention. This limits the accuracy of official statistics on foreign body aspiration. In such cases, media reports can serve as a valuable alternative data source. To explore how the Heimlich maneuver is represented in the Turkish media, we analyzed news articles containing the keyword “Heimlich” from the websites of three major news agencies.

A total of 282 news reports were identified: 67 from Anadolu Agency, 81 from İhlas News Agency, and 134 from Demirören News Agency. After excluding 108 duplicate entries and 4 irrelevant articles, 170 unique reports remained for analysis. The high number of duplicates suggests that incidents involving the Heimlich maneuver are often covered by multiple outlets, reflecting increased media attention.

Reports were categorized based on their primary focus: education, awareness, or intervention. For intervention-related reports, we analyzed variables such as the outcome, city, setting, background of the performer and recipient, recipient’s age and gender, and the type of ingested object.

Of the 170 reports, 144 involved interventions, 16 focused on education, and 10 on awareness. Although adverse effects of the Heimlich maneuver are rarely reported in the literature (1, 2), only one case in our sample had a negative outcome—a 22-year-old male with Down syndrome who died 2.5 months later in the hospital (3). Interventions occurred most frequently in educational institutions (41%) and

in cafes or restaurants (29.1%). Food was the leading cause of airway obstruction, accounting for 86.8% of cases.

Among those performing the maneuver, 41% were teachers, while only 4.9% were healthcare professionals. Consistent with the literature (1), most rescuers appeared to be untrained members of the public, although 38.9% had received first aid training. Of the individuals performing the intervention, 86.1% were male; similarly, 67.4% of recipients were male. In terms of age distribution, 16% of recipients were preschoolers, 45.8% school-aged children, 29.9% adults, and 8.3% elderly.

The figure presents a heatmap showing the geographic distribution of Heimlich maneuver incidents across Türkiye. Color intensity reflects report frequency, with darker shades indicating higher case numbers. The highest concentrations were observed in Istanbul, Ankara, and Central Anatolia, with relatively elevated numbers in the southeastern and southern regions—possibly indicating a growing adoption of first aid practices.

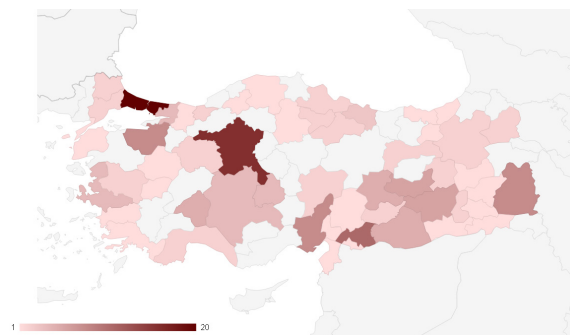


Figure 1. *The geographic distribution of Heimlich maneuver incidents reported in the news.*

Our findings suggest increased public engagement with the Heimlich maneuver, with many interventions carried out by laypersons in public settings. This reflects greater awareness and a willingness to act during emergen-

cies. Structured public training programs could further enhance the safety and effectiveness of such efforts.

Enhanced media coverage and educational initiatives may help sustain this positive trend and reduce choking-related morbidity and mortality. The growing availability of CCTV footage and broader internet access may have contributed to the increase in news coverage of these events. Expanding first-aid training programs to rural areas is essential to ensure wider dissemination of Heimlich maneuver knowledge. The impact of media coverage is evident in highly reported regions, suggesting that strategic health campaigns delivered through national and local media could significantly improve awareness.

Further investigation into the professions of rescuers, the age groups affected, and intervention outcomes could provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of Heimlich maneuver training in Türkiye.

Sincerely,

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