

Cleveland

Plain Dealer

PLAIN DEALER, SUNDAY, JANUARY 23, 1994

Heimlich takes on foe of his maneuver

ASSOCIATED PRESS

CINCINNATI

The creator of the Heimlich maneuver is taking on the National Academy of Sciences and his long-time foe, the American Red Cross, over the use of the technique on drowning victims.

Dr. Henry Heimlich planned to take his battle to the convention of the National Association For Science, Technology and Society today in Arlington, Va.

Heimlich has said that the maneuver takes no more than 15 seconds and should be the first procedure performed on a drowning victim.

The Red Cross favors mouth-to-mouth resuscitation as a first measure and the Heimlich maneuver second.

"You can't get air into the lungs until you get the water out," Heimlich said.

He has accused the prestigious academy of collaborating with the Red Cross and falsifying a report on the treatment of drowning victims.

Heimlich said research in the academy's 1991 report that failed to support the use of the Heimlich maneuver in drowning cases was faulty. He said the academy erroneously supported the theory that people drown from asphyxia without regard to the amount of water in their lungs.

"They tried to make it look like there was no water in the lungs. That was their purpose," Heimlich said Friday. "They are well aware of these articles in medical journals that prove that the Heimlich maneuver removes water from lungs."

"This is old stuff," said Barbara Rice, a spokeswoman for the Washington-based National Academy of Sciences.

"His charge was investigated, and the review committee found no scientific misconduct," she said Friday.

The academy has agreed to re-study its report, Rice said.

Ann Stingle, spokeswoman for the American Red Cross in Washington, D.C., called the charge absurd.

"To say that we falsified reports is slanderous," she said, noting that Heimlich's argument really was with the medical establishment.

Heimlich, 73, heads the Heimlich Institute in Cincinnati. He introduced the Heimlich maneuver for choking victims in the early 1970s, and has invented a number of medical products and procedures.

The national science association is based in University Park, Pa. Its membership includes educators, scientists, clergy and public interest groups.